

Sailing into Union

The Byzantine Naval Convoy for the Council of Ferrara–Florence (1438–1439)

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The transportation of the Byzantine delegation on Venetian ships from Constantinople, and back again, for the Council of Ferrara–Florence (1438–39) was an undertaking of unprecedented magnitude.¹ The arrangements to transport 700 Byzantines, including the emperor John VIII Palaiologos (1392–1448) and the patriarch of Constantinople Joseph II (1360–1439), along with other diplomatic dignitaries,

religious officials, members of the imperial family, and their belongings, required detailed logistical planning and immense financial resources.² Beginning early in the 1430s, the pope and other ecclesiastical personages of the Council of Basel (1431–37) engaged in lengthy negotiations with John VIII to organize an ecumenical council for the union of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches, and to arrange a safe sea journey to Italy on Venetian ships.³ It is the purpose of this

1 An immense amount of literature has been devoted to the Council of Ferrara–Florence, the organization of which took place during the Council of Basel, as well as to the negotiations with the Byzantines. For official decrees, documents, acts, public records, and letters, see G. Alberigo, ed., *Conciliorum oecumenicorum generaliumque decreta*, 4 vols. (Bologna, 2006–13), hereafter *COGD*, especially vol. 2; G. Hofmann, ed., *Epistolae pontificiae ad concilium Florentinum spectantes*, 3 vols. (Rome, 1940–46), hereafter *EP*; idem, ed., *Acta camerae apostolicae et civitatum Venetiarum, Ferrariae, Florentiae, Ianuae de Concilio Florentino* (Rome, 1950), hereafter *ACA*; J. Haller, ed., *Concilium Basiliense, Studien und Quellen zur Geschichte des Concils von Basel*, 8 vols. (Basel, 1896–1936), hereafter *CB*; F. Palacký, E. Birk, K. Stehlin, and K. W. Hieronimus, eds., *Monumenta conciliorum generalium seculi decimi quinti*, 4 vols. (Vienna, 1857–86), hereafter *MC*; G. D. Mansi, ed., *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, 54 vols. (Paris, 1901–27), hereafter *Mansi*; E. Cecconi, *Studi storici* (Florence, 1869), hereafter *Studi storici*; J. Gill, ed., *Quae supersunt actorum graecorum Concilii Florentini*, 2 vols. (Rome, 1953), hereafter *AG*. Additional bibliography includes J. Gill, *The Council of Florence* (Cambridge, 1959); M. Decaluwé, T. M. Izbicki, and G. Christianson, eds., *A Companion to the Council of Basel* (Leiden, 2017); H. Chadwick, *East and West: The Making of a Rift in the Church: From Apostolic Times Until the Council of Florence* (Oxford, 2003); and A. E. Siecienski, *The Filioque: History of a Doctrinal Controversy* (Oxford, 2013).

2 On the numbers of Byzantine delegates, see *EP* 1:74–75, doc. 75 (6 July 1437). On the personages traveling with the Byzantine convoy, see Archivio di Stato di Venezia (ASVe), Collegio, Secreti (CS), reg. 4, fols. 246r (10 February 1438, 1437 more veneto). The Venetian year started on 1 March, and dates are provided according to the Venetian custom (*more veneto*).

3 The organization of an ecumenical council for the union of the two churches had started during the Council of Constance (1414–18), though unsuccessfully. Shortly after the opening of the Council of Pavia–Siena (April 1423), in which the union of the Greek and Latin church was temporarily postponed, John VIII resolved to solicit the intervention of Sigismund. He left Constantinople in November 1424, arrived in Venice a month later, and from there reached Hungary. On that occasion as well, the Republic of Venice provided ships to escort John VIII from Constantinople to Venice and back, along with a loan of 1,500 ducats; see ASVe, Senato, Deliberazioni, Secreti (SDS), reg. 8, fol. 136r (30 December 1423), fol. 138v (17 January 1424, 1423 more veneto), and fol. 147r (23 March 1424); ASVe, Senato, Deliberazioni, Misti (SDM), reg. 54, fol. 169r (9 January 1424, 1423 more veneto); ASVe, Commemoriali, reg. 11, fol. 94r (27 January 1423, 1424 more veneto), and reg. 12, fol. 159r (10 January 1437, 1436 more veneto). In the fifteenth century it was part of the Palaiologan emperors' diplomatic policy to travel to the

article to discuss the logistics and arrangements of this Byzantine naval convoy, which have almost entirely escaped the attention of the scholarly world, and to frame Venice's crucial role in the negotiations in order to provide a better understanding of the republic's motivations, political ambitions, and economic maneuverings in this massive operation.

The union of the Latin and Greek churches was longed for by both the papacy and the Byzantine Empire. The latter had depleted resources and could not afford the enormous financial burden of transporting so many people and underwriting a mission that would last more than two years. In developments that would lead to its ultimate downfall, the Byzantine Empire had lost its possessions in Asia and the Balkans to the Ottomans; at the same time, the Venetian occupation of the Ionian and Aegean islands was restricting the food supply to Constantinople, which was afflicted by poverty and in 1435 was ravaged by a plague.⁴ While Ottoman ships prowled the Bosphorus Strait, John VIII was hoping that a union would obligate Latin Christendom to intervene against the infidels and defend Constantinople.⁵ In the West, the Great Occidental Schism of 1378 had created a grave crisis that ended with the election of Pope Martin V at the Council of Constance (1414–18). Following his death the situation was still critical, as papal supremacy was weakened by the Conciliarist and Hussite factions. Thus, the imminent Ottoman invasion and urgency to reassert the authority of the newly elected Pope Eugenius IV (r. 1431–47) made the *reductio orientalis ecclesiae* a priority.⁶

West and carry out negotiations in person; see V. Andriopoulou, "The Logistics of a Union: Diplomatic Communication through the Eyes of Sylvester Syropoulos," in *Sylvester Syropoulos on Politics and Culture in the Fifteenth-Century Mediterranean*, ed. F. Kondyli et al. (Farnham, Surrey, 2014), 51.

4 John of Ragusa, a Dominican theologian who was in Constantinople as a legate of the Council of Basel between 1435 and 1438, reported: "I fled to the islands . . . for the fire of the plague that was advancing horribly on both sides of the city with great fear" (*utriusque civitatis igne pestis horribiliter accessus timore humano . . . profugum me dedi per insulas*); see *Studi storici*, doc. 178 (29 January 1438), 499. See also C. Tsiamis, E. Poulakou-Rebelakou, and A. Tsakris, "Epidemic Waves of the Black Death in the Byzantine Empire," *Le infezioni in Medicina* 3 (2011): 193–201. All translations are by the author.

5 Gill, *The Council of Florence*, 43–44, 87.

6 The separation of the Latin and Greek churches dates to 1054, when the legates of Pope Leo IX (1048–54) anathematized the patriarch Michael Cerularius (1043–59). Numerous attempts

The return of the Eastern church was one of the main issues discussed during the Council of Basel, even as dissent over papal supremacy grew, with both the pope and the Fathers of Basel claiming to be the sole authority of the Latin church. Eventually an agreement with the Byzantines was reached via the *Sicut pia mater* decree issued by the fathers on 7 September 1434.⁷ It offered favorable conditions to the Byzantines: the Latin church would provide the ships for transportation to Italy, cover all expenses, and send two light galleys with 300 crossbowmen for the protection of Constantinople while the emperor was away. The *additio* to this decree, issued by the fathers in 1436, established a deadline for the dispatch of a naval convoy to Constantinople to transport the Byzantines to Italy and addressed the arrangements of their return voyage. The failure of the fathers to provide the ships before that agreed-on deadline annulled any previous agreement with the Byzantines, whose favor then tilted toward the pope.

Eugenius IV, born Gabriele Condulmer to a rich Venetian merchant family, urged the Republic of Venice to quickly prepare ships, and he succeeded in dispatching a naval convoy to Constantinople before the fathers eventually did. The two convoys arrived in Constantinople only a week apart, however. The papal naval convoy contained three great galleys and one bastard galley; the conciliar convoy comprised two great galleys and two light galleys from Genoa. The Byzantines, hitherto unaware of the division within the Latin church, ultimately decided to board the papal galleys and asked that three more Venetian Romania galleys be attached to the escort for additional safety.⁸ The emperor boarded one of his own galleys and, together with his sizable delegation, departed on 27 November 1437 from Constantinople. After crossing the north

were subsequently made toward a reconciliation, most notably the Council of Lyons in 1274. See D. J. Geanakoplos, "The Council of Florence (1438–39) and the Problem of the Union between the Greek and Latin Churches," *Church History* 24.4 (1955): 324–46; I. Mariano, "The Council and Negotiations with the Greeks," in Decaluwé, Izicki, and Christianson, *A Companion to the Council of Basel*, 310–13.

7 *Studi storici*, doc. 32 (7 September 1434); *MC* 2:752–56.

8 V. Laurent, ed., *Les Mémoires du Grand Ecclésiastique de l'Église de Constantinople Sylvestre Syropoulos sur le Concile de Florence (1438–1439)* (Paris, 1971), 198 (IV.2:3–5), hereafter *Mémoires*; see also discussion below.

Aegean Sea and sailing along the coast of Greece, they arrived in Venice on 8 February 1438.⁹ The Byzantines returned to Constantinople in 1439, as the Council of Florence proclaimed the union of the two churches. For the return voyage, the pope hired Venetian ships—two Romania galleys, two light galleys, and a pilgrim galley—but several complications, including a lack of funds, made the undertaking rather difficult. After a perilous sea journey, the emperor and his delegation arrived in Constantinople at the beginning of 1440; their round trip had taken more than two years.

A brief description of the types of Venetian ships discussed in this article is necessary here. Great galleys were large merchant ships that required more than 200 men to operate effectively. They carried and generally relied on two lateen-rigged masts, though they were also fitted with oars. Standard great galleys were around 41.2 meters long, 6.1 meters wide, and 2.7 meters deep.¹⁰ Broader in the beam than light galleys, great galleys were particularly suitable for long-distance trade, but they could be deployed in military operations. In addition to high-value cargo, they could also transport people, such as merchants and pilgrims.¹¹ Romania galleys, so called because they sailed to Constantinople and the Black Sea, were likewise merchant galleys, but smaller than a standard great galley. Romania galleys were around 41 meters long, 5.8 meters wide, and 2.5 meters deep, with a cargo capacity of 150 tons.¹² The light galley served as the typical war galley of the Venetian navy. Designed primarily for speed and maneuverability, they were long and narrow and were generally propelled by oars, though they carried one lateen-rigged mast. Light galleys were about 40 meters long, 4.8 meters wide,

and 1.85 meters deep.¹³ Bastard galleys were a hybrid between light and great galleys, but their foredeck was wider than that of a light galley to accommodate more artillery.¹⁴ All these galleys, built in the state-owned Venetian Arsenal, were rowed *alla sensile* (one man per oar), with three men sitting on the same bench.

The galleys and logistics of the Byzantine naval convoy assembled for the Council of Ferrara–Florence have never been examined in detail. In studies devoted to ecclesiastical history, doctrinal issues overshadow these topics, which are briefly discussed only insofar as they arise in conciliar sources. Although prominent in the preserved Venetian archival records, the negotiations between the pope (and to some extent the fathers) and the Republic of Venice regarding the provision of the naval convoy for the Byzantines have been ignored by past scholarship, leading to misconceptions and confusion. The Venetian archival records, which disclose the political and diplomatic maneuvers behind the convoy, are significant historical sources, as interesting and important as the solemn decrees and official records of the Latin and Greek intelligentsia concentrating on Christendom's spiritual unity. Yet Fotini Kondyli's 2014 article on the travel arrangements for the Byzantines focuses entirely on the account by Sylvester Syropoulos, a high-ranking official who was part of the Byzantine delegation.¹⁵ Even so, she provides a detailed account of the sea journey of the Byzantine delegation to Italy, contextualizing Syropoulos as a source within Mediterranean culture and effectively demonstrating how the journey's description was deployed to support the political agenda of anti-unionist Greeks, such as Syropoulos. Accurate information on the sea voyage to Italy, as well as the return voyage to Constantinople, is provided by Pamela O. Long in her introductory essay in the magisterial three-volume publication *The Book of Michael of Rhodes* (2009).¹⁶ In 1999 Mauro Bondioli and Gilberto Penzo discussed the Byzantines' naval

9 On the date of departure, see *Mémoires*, 198 (IV.2:1–2).

10 P. O. Long, D. McGee, and A. M. Stahl, eds., *The Book of Michael of Rhodes: A Fifteenth-Century Maritime Manuscript*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA, 2009), 2:416–17 (fol. 135r).

11 F. C. Lane, *Venetian Ships and Shipbuilders of the Renaissance* (Baltimore, 1934), 13–16.

12 F. C. Lane, "Venetian Merchant Galleys, 1300–1334: Private and Communal Operation," *Speculum* 38.2 (1963): 179–205; D. Stöckly, *Le système de l'Incanto des galées du marché à Venise (fin XIII^e–milieu XV^e siècle)* (Leiden, 1995), 101–19; D. McGee, "The Shipbuilding Text of Michael of Rhodes," in Long, McGee, and Stahl, *The Book of Michael of Rhodes*, 3:211–41; F. C. Lane, "Venetian Shipping during the Commercial Revolution," *American Historical Review* 38.2 (1933): 220.

13 G. Bonfiglio Dosio, ed., *Ragioni antiche spettanti all'arte del mare et fabriche de vasselli: Manoscritto nautico del sec. XV* (Venice, 1987), 186.

14 P. Pantera, *L'Armata navale* (Rome, 1614), 45.

15 F. Kondyli, "The Logistics of a Union: The Travelling Arrangements and the Journey to Venice," in Kondyli et al., *Sylvester Syropoulos on Politics and Culture*, 135–53.

16 P. O. Long, "Introduction: The World of Michael of Rhodes, Venetian Mariner," in Long, McGee, and Stahl, *The Book of Michael of Rhodes*, 3:15–19.

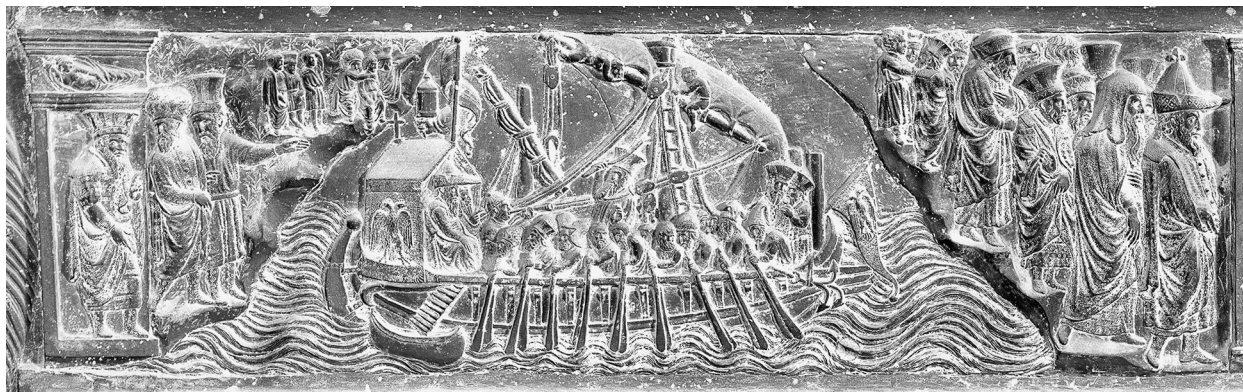


Fig. 1. The departure of Emperor John Palaiologos from Constantinople. Bronze door by Antonio Averlino (Filarete), Saint Peter Basilica, Rome. Alinari / Art Resource, NY.



Fig. 2. The departure of Emperor John Palaiologos from Venice. Bronze door by Antonio Averlino (Filarete), Saint Peter Basilica, Rome. Alinari / Art Resource, NY.

convoy in an article on a fifteenth-century dynasty of Rhodian shipwrights in the service of the Arsenal, but their article is inaccurate in many respects: they not only claim that the convoy from Constantinople to Venice consisted of two great galleys and two bastard galleys, but they also argue that the convoy was escorted to Constantinople by two light galleys with 300 crossbowmen aboard—galleys and men both intended to protect the imperial city from the Turks.¹⁷ Venetian

archival sources disprove these assertions: first, the naval convoy was much larger than they contend, as it consisted of three great galleys, one bastard galley, and three Romania galleys; second, the crossbowmen sailed to Constantinople aboard one of the papal great galleys; and finally, light galleys were not part of this convoy (Venice approved the dispatch of three light galleys to Constantinople by senatorial decree in 1438).¹⁸

In addition, nothing is known about the galley aboard which John VIII sailed to Italy and then back to Constantinople. The Florentine sculptor Antonio Averlino, better known as Filarete, celebrated it in two different panels on the bronze door of Old Saint Peter's

17 M. Bondioli and G. Penzo, "Teodoro Baxon e Nicola Palopano proti delle galee sottili: L'influsso Greco nelle costruzioni navali veneziane della prima metà del XV secolo," *Archeologia delle acque* 1.2 (1999): 77. See also J. Harris, "Bessarion on Shipbuilding," *Byzantinoslavica* 55.2 (1994): 291–303, which provides a more historically accurate account on the fifteenth-century dynasty of Rhodian shipwrights.

18 ASVe, SDM, reg. 60, fol. 84r (24 May and 26 May 1438); see discussion below.

completed in 1445, now adorning the façade of Saint Peter's Basilica. These bronze panels show the emperor's arrival and departure below Christ enthroned and the Annunciation scene, respectively (figs. 1 and 2). Kondyli, lamenting the scarcity of information on the imperial galley in Syropoulos's account, asks: "But what ship did he [John VIII] use? Was this another Venetian galley that he hired on his own, or perhaps a Byzantine ship?"¹⁹ Bondioli and Penzo have suggested that John VIII sailed to Italy aboard a Venetian light galley that was designed and built by the Rhodian shipwright Nicola Palopano, who worked in the Arsenal from 1424 until his death in 1437.²⁰ This article will conclusively demonstrate instead that the emperor sailed to Italy aboard a Byzantine galley, returning to Constantinople in 1439 in a Venetian light galley. Moreover, the second galley, which Venetian archival sources refer to as the *galea Imperatoris*, was built not by Nicola Palopano—who, in 1439, was long dead—but rather by his son Giorgio, who worked for the Arsenal from 1437 until 1453.²¹

While discussing the logistics of the Byzantine naval convoy, I aim to correct past errors and misconceptions, supplementing the vast array of primary sources from the conciliar period with the abundant Venetian archival records, here presented and examined for the first time. I argue that the transportation of the Byzantine delegation to Italy was important not simply as a matter of organization but in the struggle over authority between the pope and the fathers. Both sides recognized that success in such a massive undertaking would win prestige and diplomatic leverage, as indicated by their race to provide a naval convoy to the Byzantines before the deadline fixed by the 1436 additio. The coming of the Byzantines to Italy was one of the pope's greatest achievements, bolstering his supremacy

over the fathers and making possible the short-lived union of the Latin and Greek churches.

This article is not intended to describe the sea journey of the Byzantine delegation to Italy and then back to Constantinople, as Kondyli and Long have already produced excellent accounts. Rather, it focuses on the ships of the Byzantine naval convoy and the convoy's logistics, arguing that this practical and nontheological element played a central role in the outcome of the negotiations and shaped political policies and strategies. More broadly, it may offer some insight into one of the most massive operations in maritime history, which contributed to the union, though only temporary, of the two forms of Christianity.

The Naval Convoy of the Council of Basel

In 1431, shortly before his death, Pope Martin V had come close to reaching an agreement with Emperor John VIII on arranging a council in Italy at papal expense. The agreement required

two light galleys with 300 crossbowmen to be sent for the protection of the city [Constantinople] and that the captain of the galleys and crossbowmen shall be those whom the Emperor shall command and shall confirm in their loyalty to himself by oath. And no matter what the means he shall have for the payment of the galleys and the crossbowmen, that he should have also more money, so that should there happen to occur war because of the infidels, he may hire some of the citizens as well as others, and that the House may not be endangered. But the crossbowmen should all be either Cretans, or from Taranto, or Catalans, or others similar.

Also, that four merchant ships be sent for the transportation of all who will come to the Council, namely the Emperor and the Patriarch and all to the number of 700; of these four ships, one shall be from Constantinople, but at the expense of the church.²²

19 Kondyli, "The Logistics of a Union," 140.

20 On Nicola Palopano's career in the Venetian Arsenal, see ASVe, Patroni e Provveditori all'Arsenal, busta 566, fol. 71 (15 December 1424); ASVe, SDM, reg. 56, fol. 1v (16 March 1426); reg. 57, fol. 201r (7 March 1430); reg. 58, fol. 136v (2 August 1432); reg. 60, fol. 17r (4 June 1437) and fol. 31r (8 August 1437). See also ASVe, SDM, reg. 47, fol. 155r (8 December 1407).

21 On Giorgio Palopano's career, see ASVe, SDM, reg. 60, fol. 31r (8 August 1437), fol. 66r (8 March 1438), fol. 127r (27 February 1439, more veneto 1438), fol. 130v (2 March 1439), fol. 170r (17 September 1439); See also ASVe, Senato, Deliberazioni, Mar, reg. 1, fol. 101v (3 July 1440).

22 *Studi storici*, doc. 6 (1431), 18: *Mittantur galee tenues due et balistarum trecenti ad custodiam civitatis, sintque capitanei galearum et balistariorum quos Imperator iusserit sibi fide iureiurando firmet. Et quecumque habiturus sit expensas pro solvendis galeis et balistariis habeat etiam plures pecunias ut, si accideret et fieret bellum per infideles, possit stipendia accipere quosdam ex civibus ac etiam ex aliis ut illa*

After Martin V's death, his successor Eugenius IV and the Council of Basel resolved to resume negotiations with the Byzantines. The council officially opened on 23 July 1431 but began in earnest only in early September, when its president, Cardinal Giuliano Cesarini, and a few other ecclesiastic dignitaries arrived in Basel. Upon his arrival Cesarini first addressed the Hussite heresy, which had become the most pressing issue, postponing any discussion on the union of the Latin and Greek churches. The only action he took toward the union was to urge Eugenius IV to appear in Basel and to summon the Byzantines to the council to begin negotiations.²³ In December 1431 the pope, rather than accept the council's invitation, issued the *Quoniam alto* Bull, which dissolved the Council of Basel because too few prelates were attending and called for a new council to be assembled in Bologna in eighteen months to discuss the Greek question.²⁴ The next year, the pope sent from Rome an ecclesiastical letter to all the captains and shipowners in Latin Christendom, urging them to provide "galleys, ships, and any other vessel . . . at low fare fees" for transporting the Byzantine delegation to Italy.²⁵ Nothing much was achieved or discussed at the council, however.

The *Quoniam alto* Bull, which affirmed the pope's authority over the council, was strongly rejected by the fathers, who resolved to take the Greek question into

their own hands.²⁶ On 2 January 1433, without papal approval, the fathers sent the bishop of Suda Antonio and the Augustinian theologian Alberto de Crispis to Constantinople in order to invite Byzantine delegates to Basel, where they could discuss the prospect of a union. From Constantinople three envoys were subsequently dispatched: Demetrius Palaiologos Metochites; Isidore, abbot of the Constantinopolitan monastery of Saint Demetrius; and John Dishypatus, who arrived in Basel in July 1434. There they began negotiations with Cesarini, closely following Martin V's 1431 agreement.²⁷

The resulting agreement was solemnly approved on 7 September 1434 in the nineteenth session of the Council of Basel in the decree *Sicut pia mater*. This decree established that the Latin church would provide the Byzantines with 15,000 ducats to cover the travel expenses and additional funding for their expenditures during their stay in Italy. For the transportation of the Byzantine delegation, the decree stipulated that

the Western Church would provide for the expenses of four great galleys, two of which must be from Constantinople, and two from elsewhere, for the transportation—when the time comes—of the Emperor, patriarchs, and prelates of the Eastern Church with its delegation of up to 700 people to our port, and back to Constantinople. . . .

Also, that within 10 months starting from next November, the sacred Council would be bound to dispatch two great galleys and two light galleys to Constantinople with 300 crossbowmen. . . .

Also, the aforementioned ambassadors of the sacred Council shall arrange for the expenses of two light galleys and 300 crossbowmen for the

domus non periclinaret. Balistarii vero omnes sin taut Cretenses, aut Tarentini, aut Cathalani, alii similes. Item ut mictantur galee quatuor onorarie [read onerarie] ut ferant omnes qui venture sunt in synodum, Imperatorem scilicet et Patriarcham et omnes usque septingentos, ex quibus quatuor galeis una sit ex Constantinopoli, expensis tamen ecclesie. See also *EP* 1:20, doc. 26 (1430). The term *onorarie* should be *onerarie* (merchant ships). See also *Mémoires*, 114 (II.13:21–23).

23 *CB* 1:50.

24 *EP* 1:24–25, doc. 31 (18 December 1431); see also M. Decaluwé, "Papal Politics and the Council," in Decaluwé, Izbicki, and Christianson, *A Companion to the Council of Basel*, 114. The Council of Basel was poorly attended at its opening because travel to Basel was made difficult by the war between Burgundy and Austria. Eventually, the pope revoked the *Quoniam alto* Bull and, on 1 August 1433, he issued the *Dudum sacrum* Bull, by which he gave concession to the council to meet. Further concessions were granted on 15 December 1433 in the second version of the *Dudum sacrum* Bull, which was approved by the fathers in the 16th session of the Council of Basel; see *COGD* 2:917–35.

25 *EP* 1:27–28, doc. 34 (7 November 1432): *galeis, navibus, ceterisque navigiis . . . nabuli modesta exactione.*

26 *MC* 2:95–107.

27 *MC* 2:752–56. Their sea voyage was ill-fated from the beginning and sheds light on the dangers of navigation at that time. Shortly after setting sail on 11 November 1433 from Constantinople, the three ambassadors encountered a violent storm and were forced to return to the Byzantine imperial city; see *Studi storici*, doc. 16 (28 November 1433). On their second departure on 11 January of the following year, they decided to change route and reach Basel by sailing through the Black Sea, continuing their voyage overland from there. This decision proved disastrous: they miraculously survived a dreadful storm and, while traveling through Hungary, they were robbed of everything they had on them, including their clothes; see *Studi storici*, doc. 26 (25 June 1434).

defense of the city of Constantinople during the absence of the Emperor, and that the crew of the said galleys and the crossbowmen shall take an oath of loyalty to the Emperor. And the captains of [the galleys] shall be those appointed by the Emperor.²⁸

A comparison between the *Sicut pia mater* decree and Martin V's agreement makes clear that the latter was more advantageous for the Byzantines. Both provided a total of four galleys, but in Martin V's agreement only one was from Constantinople, whereas in the *Sicut pia mater* decree the Byzantines had to arrange for two galleys on their own. Although Martin V's agreement identifies these ships as *galee onerarie* and the 1434 decree as *galeas grossas*, the different terms indicate the same type of ship: merchant galleys. Both Martin V's initial agreement and the *Sicut pia mater* decree established that two light galleys would be sent with 300 crossbowmen to protect Constantinople. These two light galleys were not part of the Byzantine naval convoy and were to remain in the imperial city during John VIII's absence. Thus, according to its 1434 decree the council would dispatch to Constantinople by August 1435 a total of two great galleys for the sea journey and two light galleys carrying 300 crossbowmen.

When the fathers sent their ambassador Simon Frénon to Italy for the pope's *beneplacitum* to authenticate the *Sicut pia mater* decree, they received news that inflamed their indignation. Without informing the fathers, the pope had already concluded negotiations with John VIII on his own. In July 1433 he had sent his legate Cristoforo Garatoni to Constantinople, where John VIII agreed to arrange for a council there at the

expense of the Byzantines.²⁹ To finalize this arrangement in July 1434, the pope had again sent Garatoni, now appointed apostolic nuncio, to Constantinople.³⁰ John VIII, assured by Garatoni that the fathers, too, had accepted this location, dispatched George and Manuel Dishypatus to the pope with a copy of the agreement to receive his approval.³¹ The fathers were astounded by the pope's maneuvers: first, he carried out rival negotiations with the Byzantines; second, a council in Constantinople would necessitate the dissolution of the Council of Basel, since two councils could not be held at the same time; and third, a council in Constantinople was not ecumenical, since the Western church would be represented only by the pope's legate Garatoni and a retinue of theologians. To avoid further embarrassment with the Byzantines, the pope sent Garatoni and the Dishypatus brothers to Basel, where the divide was discussed in detail and it was resolved to let the Byzantine envoys decide. On 27 April 1435, all envoys committed to abiding by the fathers' will and following the arrangements to which they had agreed on 7 September 1434.³² In the end, the pope acquiesced and approved the decree *Sicut pia mater*, which established ground rules for a union council and became the standard protocol for all future negotiations with the Eastern church.

Immediately thereafter the fathers dispatched three envoys—John of Ragusa, Heinrich Menger, and Simon Frénon—to Constantinople with a copy of the decree for the emperor's approval. But dissent arose again, this time among the Byzantines. In addition to opposing the decree's preamble, in which the Greeks, likewise the Hussite heretics, were regarded as those who had separated from the Church, the Byzantines strongly resented that the decree failed to include any plans for their return, and they insisted that it had to be modified accordingly.³³ John VIII feared that if union was not reached, the council would not arrange

28 COGD 2:942, 3–6: *Ecclesia occidentalis solvat expensas quatuor galearum grossarum, quarum duae sint de Constantinopoli, et duae aliunde, pro conducendo, dum tempus erit, ad portum nostrum, et reduciendo ad Constantinopolim domimum Imperatorem et patriarchas et praelatos Ecclesiae orientalis cum suis, usque ad numerum septingentiarum personarum. . . . Item, quod infra decem menses, incipiendos a mense novembris proxime sequenti, teneatur sacrum Concilium mittere duas galeas grossas et duas subtiles versus Constantinopolim cum trecentis balistariis. Item, ordinabunt praedicti ambassiatores sacri Concilii de expensis duarum galearum subtilium et trecentorum balistariorum pro custodia civitatis Constantinopolitanae tempore absentiae domini Imperatoris, et quod gentes dictarum galearum et ipsi balistarii iurabunt in manibus Imperatoris fideliter se habere. Et capitanei eorum sint quos Imperator instituerit.*

29 *Studi storici*, doc. 31 (31 August 1434). In this document, the pope asserted that a council held in Constantinople would be less expensive for the Latin church.

30 EP 1:29–30, docs. 36–37 (13 July 1434).

31 *Studi storici*, doc. 41 (12 November 1434) and doc. 42 (15 November 1434). Garatoni and the two Byzantine envoys arrived in Venice in December 1434; see *ibid.*, doc. 44 (21 December 1434).

32 MC 2:786–95.

33 *Studi storici*, doc. 57 (October 1435).

for the return voyage to Constantinople or cover their expenses. In addition, John VIII asked the fathers to issue a safe-conduct for the Byzantine delegation's return from Europe.³⁴ A year passed before the fathers complied with John VIII's requests: on 14 April 1436, they issued the additio to the *Sicut pia mater* decree and a safe-conduct for the Byzantine delegation.³⁵ The additio established that whether the union was reached or not, the Latin church would cover the expenses and provide galleys for the return voyage. More importantly, it set the end of May of the following year as the deadline for collecting the funds and dispatching a naval convoy to Constantinople to transport the Byzantines to Italy.³⁶ On the very same day, to meet this immense expenditure, the fathers issued the *Vox illa iucunditatis* decree, granting indulgences to everyone contributing to the cost of the Byzantine delegation's transportation and other expenses.³⁷

The need to choose the city to host the council sparked intense debate, internal struggle, and growing turmoil within the Council of Basel, which divided into two irreconcilable factions: the majority (*major pars*) was led by the archbishop of Arles, Louis d'Aleman, while the minority included personages such as Cesarini, who embraced the *Sicut pia mater* decree, and thus was called the healthier part (*sanior pars*). According to the decree, the possible candidates were Bologna, Milan, Ancona, a city in Calabria in Italy, Buda, Vienna, or a city in Savoy outside the Italian territory. But the fathers, realizing that they could not meet the deadline for collecting the funds and dispatching a

naval convoy, decreed that the city chosen for the council would provide 85,000 ducats for the Byzantines' lodging and daily expenses.³⁸ They therefore dispatched ambassadors to various Italian cities to ask for financial support; the cities that answered were Florence, Udine, and Parma. The faction most hostile to the pope was led by the archbishop of Arles, Louis d'Aleman, who favored Avignon. That city, given its recent role in the so-called Babylonian Captivity of the papacy (1309–77) and the Western Schism that followed (1378–1417), was not an optimal choice for a synod that supposedly aimed to reunite the two churches. John Dishypatus and Manuel Boullotes, along with several other religious personages, feared that Aleman was planning to return the seat of the Roman Curia to Avignon.³⁹ Before sailing to Constantinople, John Dishypatus protested vehemently in front of the fathers, denouncing the choice of Avignon because it was not among the cities included in the *Sicut pia mater* decree.⁴⁰ The Byzantines hoped for an easy-to-access city on or near the Adriatic coast, as many dignitaries were advanced in age.⁴¹ Ultimately, they suggested postponing the decision about the location of the new council until their arrival in Italy.⁴² Emperor Sigismund, who sided with the fathers, first proposed Basel, then Udine, and lastly his capital Buda, without receiving the pope's approval.⁴³

In June 1436 Sigismund of Hungary, who supported the Council, sent the ambassador Simon de Valle from Crema to Venice to solicit support. He appeared in front of the Senate speaking in favor of Udine, then part of the Venetian *terraferma*, and asked for a loan of 7,000 ducats to hire two great galleys for the transportation of the Byzantines and two light galleys with 300 crossbowmen to protect Constantinople.⁴⁴

34 Ibid., doc. 66 (26 November 1435). A safe-conduct (*salvacondotto*) is a document granting its bearer immunity from arrest, harm, or fear of death when passing through a territory.

35 Ibid., doc. 82 (additio, 14 April 1436) and ibid., doc. 83 (safe-conduct, same date). Negotiations for the return of the Byzantine delegation to Constantinople were held back in 1434 between the Byzantine ambassadors (Demetrius Palaiologos Metochites, Abbot Isidore, and John Dishypatus) and the Fathers of Basel, but the details were inexplicably not included into the *Sicut pia mater* decree; see ibid., doc. 30 (August 1434).

36 *Studi storici*, doc. 83 (14 April 1436).

37 Ibid., doc. 84 (14 April 1436). This decree was issued to compensate for the financial loss resulting from a previous decree, *In nomine*, which was also issued by the fathers and abolished the papal practice of collecting annates; see *MC* 2:801 (9 June 1435). The annates were taxes paid to the ordaining authorities by newly appointed clergy in their first year. This decree was in truth a reformist effort against simony.

38 *MC* 2:906.

39 *Studi storici*, doc. 124 (24 May 1437).

40 *Studi storici*, doc. 106 (15 February 1437).

41 On the *maritimum locum*, see the letter sent by John VIII to the pope in which the patriarch describes himself as an old man afflicted by infirmity; *Studi storici*, doc. 60 (11 November 1435).

42 *Studi storici*, doc. 137 (4 July 1437).

43 *Studi storici*, doc. 138 (5 July 1437).

44 ASVe, SDS, reg. 13, fol. 245v (20 June 1436); fols. 246r–247r (28 June 1436); and fols. 247r–v (28 June 1436). Bondioli and Penzo erroneously cite the documents dated 28 June 1436 as conclusive evidence regarding the types and numbers of the Byzantine naval convoy's ships; see Bondioli and Penzo, "Teodoro Baxon," 77. Simon de Valle's diplomatic visit is recorded in a letter written by Enea

The senators, who were aware of the dissent between the pope and the council, assured him of their desire to accommodate the request but added, "First, we want to know what the Supreme Pontiff thinks about it."⁴⁵ This reply put a temporary stop to the negotiations between the fathers and Venice. On 15 September 1436, Simon de Valle reiterated his request of money on behalf of the council, but at the beginning of November the senators ultimately refused the loan, asserting that they had just renewed the anti-Milanese league with Florence (formed in 1430) and that the financing of the war against Milan was a priority for the republic.⁴⁶

Thus, toward the end of 1436, the 31 May 1437 deadline to send a naval convoy to the Byzantines was approaching, so the fathers turned to Nicodus of Mentone, a nobleman from Savoy who was the governor of the province of Nice and of all its naval stations.⁴⁷ On 19 November 1436 he was appointed captain of the naval convoy, and he pledged to provide the fathers with two great galleys, two light galleys, and 300 crossbowmen.

Silvio Piccolomini (Pius II): *Multa de Foro Julii* (Udine) *ubertate Venetorumque potentia ac magnificentia Simon Venetus peroravit*; see *Studi storici*, 178n27. Like Udine, Crema was a city then part of the Venetian land dominion.

45 ASVe, SDS, reg. 13, fol. 245v (20 June 1436): *primo audire volumus superinde opinione Summo Pontificis*. With regard to the city of Udine as the location of the future council, the senators asserted that Monfalcone, a city nearby Trieste, was a better choice given its prestige and proximity to the sea; see ASVe, SDS, reg. 13, fols. 258r–v (27 August 1436).

46 ASVe, SDS, reg. 14, fol. 1r (5 November 1436). The expense for the league was exorbitant. At the end of November, Venice and Florence appointed Francesco Sforza Visconti captain of the league until 1440 with 1,000 infantrymen and 1,000 horsemen. Sforza would receive a salary of 1,000 florins per month, whereas the salary of all the soldiers amounted to 14,000 florins per month. Sforza and his soldiers were stationed in the Po valley; when he was closer to Venice, the republic would have paid the salary for 600 infantrymen and 600 horsemen, and Florence the remaining soldiers; when he was closer to Tuscany, it was the opposite; see ASVe, Commemoriali, reg. 13, fol. 26v (27 November 1436) and ASVe, SDS, reg. 14, fols. 1v–4v (10 November 1436) and fol. 7v (28 November 1436). In the league against the Duchy of Milan there was also the pope and Genoa. An accurate account of the war between Venice and Milan is provided by D. Romano, *The Likeness of Venice: A Life of Doge Francesco Foscari, 1373–1457* (New Haven, 2007), 117–78.

47 The name of Nicodus of Mentone is variously spelled in the sources as Nicholas de Menichone, Nicolas Montone, and Nicodemus de Monte.

After the mass of the Holy Spirit was solemnly celebrated by the archbishop of Bourges, and he blessed the banners portraying the coat of arms of the church—white keys on a red background—the articles and propositions agreed on with the said soldier Nicodus were read publicly; it was concluded that he is bound to provide four seaworthy good galleys—two great galleys and two light galleys—adequately equipped with tools, weapons, cannons, etc.; 45 crossbowmen must be aboard each galley, along with the required officials; on each galley, there must be three rowers on each bench, one captain, one master of the oarsmen, one submaster of the oarsmen, three councilors, one helmsman, and two trumpeters with one cook; in addition to these galleys, equipped as above, he is bound to provide 300 crossbowmen who have to remain in Constantinople along with two light galleys to protect the city. These galleys, together with the aforesaid crossbowmen, must be ready to depart from the harbor of Nice with the ambassadors of the council by 1 March, and must arrive in Constantinople—if the weather is not contrary—by the end of May or earlier, if possible.⁴⁸

Concerned about meeting the settled deadline, the fathers stressed that the naval convoy should leave no later than 1 March and arrive by 31 May or possibly earlier. For the amount of 30,800 florins, Nicodus would provide the soldiers and assemble the requisite

48 MC 2:915–16: *Etenim solemnī celebrata missa de spiritu sancto per archiepiscopum Bituricensem, factaque per eum benedictione vexilla cum armis ecclesie depictis clavibus albis in campo rubeo, lecta sunt publice capitula et convenciones concordata cum dicto milite Nicodo effectus huius: ut dare teneretur quatuor bonas galeas navigationi aptas, duas grossas et duas subtiles, sufficienter fulcitas instrumentis, armis, bombardis, etc., in qualibetque galea essent XLV balistarii alii-que necessarii officiales, et in banco cuiuslibet tres marinarii, item unus patronus, comitrius, subcomitrius, tres consiliarii, pilotus et duo tubicinatores cum uno coco; item ultra predictas galeas, fulcitas ut premitur, teneretur dare tricentos balistarios permansuros Constantinopoli, et cum illis duas galeas subtiles pro custodia civitatis; huiusmodi vero galee prima die Marcii unacum predictis balistariis essent parate ad recedendum de portu Nicie cum ambasiatoribus concilii, applicaturi, nisi tempus adversaretur, Constantinopoli in fine Maii au cicius, si possibile esset*. (After the mass, Nicodus of Mentone was also given the admiral staff (*baculum capitaneatus*); see Mansi 31:207.

galleys.⁴⁹ Nicodus asked for a loan of 6,000 ducats from Genoa, where he hired two light galleys and two great galleys; from Nice he hired a sailing ship for the transport of the crossbowmen and a galliot for patrolling. From Provence he recruited 300 crossbowmen, after King René of Anjou granted his permit. But, as the deadline for the departure of the convoy was approaching, the cardinal of Arles, who was supposed to collect the funds, did not deliver the money as agreed. Therefore, in February 1437, Sigismund sent Simon de Valle back to Venice to again request two great galleys for the sea journey and two light galleys with 300 crossbowmen to be stationed in Constantinople. Sigismund was more authoritative than the fathers: back in 1435 Venice and Sigismund agreed to form a ten-year-long league against Filippo Maria Visconti, Duke of Milan.⁵⁰ Venice could not ignore Sigismund's renewed request, although in September 1436 the republic had already declined to help the fathers given the urgency of financing the war against Milan. Temporizing, the senators assured Sigismund that they would provide the galleys, but only after the payment of more than 20,000 ducats. "We inform [you]," the senators replied, "that each galley costs 1,000 ducats for each month of deployment and, once armed, a four-month salary must be paid in advance. Our crossbowmen cost 1,200 ducats for each month of service, and a four-month salary must be paid in advance."⁵¹ A few months later, the senators sent Sigismund a letter whose complete reversal of the Venetian policy from the previous year can be explained only by Venice's desperate need for help in the war against the Duke of Milan. In the letter, the senators first apologized that their newly appointed ambassador, Francesco Barbaro, was not yet in Buda to finalize the arrangements they had agreed on in February, alleging that he had fallen ill and was still convalescing; they then provided a long account of the ongoing war with Filippo Maria Visconti, so that "we might persuade Your Caesarean Majesty to raise [your] mighty arm

against the very same enemy of ours."⁵² Sigismund's negotiations with Venice did not fall through, however, and he died at the end of that year.

Confusion reigned on 7 May 1437 in the twenty-fifth session of the Council of Basel, as the location of the future council was still an open question. Two decrees were read simultaneously: the decree of the *major pars* proposed Basel as first choice, with Avignon or a city in Savoy as other options; the decree of the *senior pars* named Florence, Udine, or a city that would be convenient to both the pope and the Byzantines.⁵³ The pope was well aware both that holding a council in Italy would bolster his prestige at the expense of the fathers and that dispatching a naval convoy to Constantinople was crucial to the outcome, especially since the deadline of 31 May was approaching. In an escalation of anti-conciliar maneuvers, Eugenius IV began negotiations with the Republic of Venice to assemble a naval convoy.

In the following months, the cardinal of Arles eventually was able to procure the money for the naval convoy of the council; however, the deadline had already passed. Nicodus could set sail from the harbor of Nice, Villefranche-sur-Mer, with the galliot and the sailing ship carrying the crossbowmen only on 6 August 1437. A few days later, while sailing off the waters near Albenga, the fleet of René of Anjou stopped Nicodus because he had not paid the passage fees and had recruited some of the king's subjects to be crossbowmen. After this short delay, on 18 August Nicodus arrived in Genoa, where the four galleys he had hired were being armed and fitted. Once the galleys were ready, the council's naval convoy set sail to Constantinople; but along the Tyrrhenian coast, near Porto Pisano, the convoy was attacked by the Catalan pirate Rodrigo de Lison, who succeeded in capturing the sailing ship.⁵⁴ By the end of September 1437, however, the convoy was able to resume its voyage to Constantinople (fig. 3).

While the council naval convoy was sailing toward its destination, on 18 September 1437, the pope issued

49 Mansi 30:1121; see also MC 2:916.

50 ASVe, Commemoriali, reg. 13, fol. 1r (31 August 1435).

51 ASVe, SDS, reg. 14, fol. 20r (18 February 1437, 1436 more veneto): *Advisamus quod galee volent pro tempore quo stabunt extra de expensis ducatos mille pro qualibet in mense, et volent pagam quatuor mensium quando armabunt. Ballistarii nostri volent ducatos milleducatos in mense, et volent pagam quatuor mensium ad ministerio.*

52 ASVe, Collegio, Secreti (CS), reg. 4, fols. 64r-v (18 April 1437): *Suademus ut per Vostram Cesaream Maiestatem contra ipsum eodem hostem, potenti brachio insurgat.*

53 MC 2:966-68 (majority decree); MC 2:980-81 (minority decree).

54 *Studi storici*, doc. 179 (30 January 1438), 523-24.

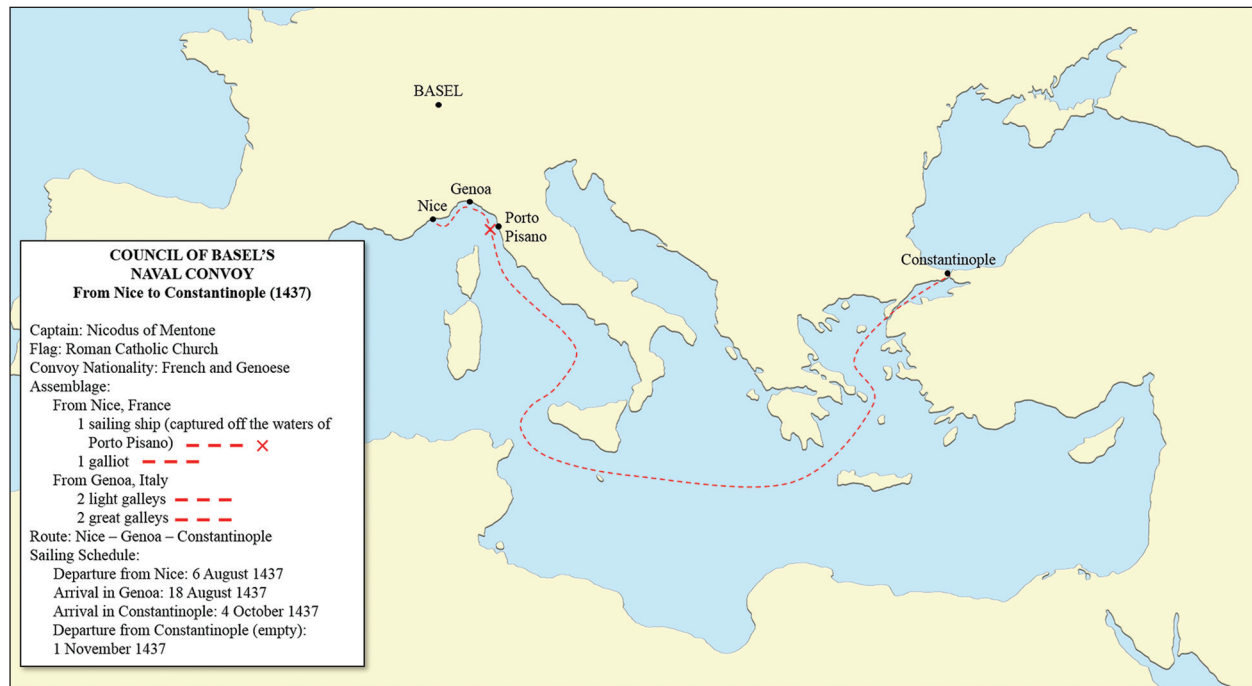


Fig. 3. Logistics and assemblage of the Council of Basel's naval convoy. Drawing by the author.

the *Doctoris gentium* Bull, in which he chose Ferrara as the city for the council.⁵⁵ A few months later, the pope issued another bull, *Pridem ex iustis*, in which he officially transferred the council from Basel to Ferrara.⁵⁶

The Papal Naval Convoy

On 28 May 1437, just two days before the expiration of the terms fixed in the 1436 *additio* decree, the fathers obtained an extension of the deadline for dispatching the galleys to Constantinople to mid-July.⁵⁷ But their inability to dispatch a naval convoy to Constantinople before the deadline tilted the balance of Byzantine favor toward the pope. In his eyes, “since the Council had failed to meet the terms before the assigned and fixed deadline, any agreement made by the Emperor through his golden bulls, and through the decree and pledge with the Council, is expired, and after the

month of May, the Emperor and the Patriarch are free from any obligation.”⁵⁸ Toward the end of May, the pope, who was then in Bologna, hastened to contact Venice: he dispatched his nephew Marco Condulmer, archbishop of Tarentaise, to urge the Venetians to prepare a naval convoy to be sent to Constantinople for the purpose of transporting the Byzantines to Italy.⁵⁹ In response, the newly appointed Venetian ambassador Ermolao Donato traveled to Bologna and delivered to the pope a reply written by the doge himself, Francesco Foscari.⁶⁰ The doge granted the pope the requisite galleys and, proclaiming Venice's unconditional support of the papal policy, another galley to carry the papal ambassadors to Constantinople. This letter provides no further information about the naval convoy. However,

55 *Studi storici*, doc. 158 (18 September 1437). A safe-conduct for all the personages participating in the council was issued a few days earlier by the Marquess of Ferrara, Niccolò d'Este; see *ACA*, doc. 1 (14 September 1437).

56 *Studi storici*, doc. 170 (30 December 1437).

57 *Studi storici*, doc. 137 (4 July 1437).

58 *Studi storici*, doc. 188 (1 March 1438), 578: *Omnis obligatio quam fecit dominus Imperator per suas bullas aureas, et per Decretum, et per confirmationem cum Concilio Basiliensi expiraverat, quoniam, infra terminum assignatum et limitatum, omnia ex parte Concilii defecerant, et post mensem maii ipse Imperator et Patriarcha liberi fuerunt ad omni obligatione.*

59 ASVe, SDS, reg. 14, fol. 38r (1 June 1437). The pope sent two letters to Venice, dated 25 and 29 May 1437.

60 On Ermolao Donato's election as ambassador to the pope, see ASVe, SDS, reg. 14, fol. 38v (8 June 1437).

it discloses what dictated Venice's policy regarding the fathers' earlier request of a naval convoy: the fear of war against the Ottomans. As the doge explained to the pope, that was the reason why the republic had delayed when Simon de Valle asked for the city of Udine to be the location of the future council, and also when he asked for a naval convoy. If the Ottomans saw Venetian galleys protecting Constantinople, or even a Venetian convoy transporting the Byzantines to Italy, war would be inevitable. Therefore, the republic would provide its ships to the pope only if they flew the Papal States' flag.⁶¹

Information about the naval convoy assembled by the pope is provided by the senatorial decree of 25 June 1437, in which Venice agreed to provide one bastard galley, three great galleys, and two light galleys.⁶² The three great galleys were to carry John VIII and his sizable delegation to Venice, the bastard galley was to carry the papal envoys to Constantinople for the final diplomatic negotiations with John VIII before his departure, and the two light galleys were to transport 300 crossbowmen to Constantinople to protect the city until John VIII's return.

Venice modified this agreement with the pope, seeking both to avoid war with the Ottomans and to optimize time and resources without disrupting trade with the Levant. The dispatch of the two light galleys with 300 crossbowmen to Constantinople was crucial to maintaining peace with the Ottomans, but Venice resolved not to send them. Considerable evidence supports the following scenario: first, the 300 crossbowmen were transported to Constantinople aboard one of the papal great galleys, and not aboard the light galleys as initially planned.⁶³ Second, John VIII was informed at the beginning of September 1437 that the papal convoy would soon be in Constantinople, and he spent the last three weeks of the month arming two light galleys of his own.⁶⁴ In all likelihood, he intended to leave them in Constantinople to protect the city. Third, a

draft of a senatorial decree dated 8 June 1437 about the dispatch of two light galleys to Constantinople indicates that the vote on this decree was postponed until November 1437.⁶⁵ Eventually, Venice passed a decree to send three galleys, but only on 24 May 1438. At that time, Venice set advantageous conditions for itself: all the expenses for these galleys had to be paid either by the emperor or by the pope, and all the galleys had to fly Byzantine flags and banners.⁶⁶ Venice's reason for sending three galleys, rather than two as initially agreed, was pragmatic: the imperial galley's crew needed to be returned to Constantinople. On the very same day as the vote on the decree, John VIII had requested permission to leave his imperial galley moored in Venice, and the senators willingly granted it. Strictly speaking, although the imperial galley would be inactive while John VIII was in Italy, the crew would still be in service and would need to be remunerated. Wisely, anticipating his long stay at the council, John VIII decided to dismiss his crew. Thus, the Senate agreed to send an additional light galley that would transport the imperial galley's crew back home. Accordingly, two days later, the senators decreed that the two light galleys provided by Venice would have Venetian captains and crew, and the third galley would have the imperial galley's Byzantine crew.⁶⁷

Venice's concern regarding the pope's request for three great galleys to transport the Byzantines to Italy and one bastard galley to carry his envoys to Constantinople was that providing them would disrupt trade in the Levant. Thus, Venice had initially planned to give the pope the great galleys bound for the Black Sea markets, since Constantinople was along the route. In 1437 the *incanto* of the state-owned ships that made up the convoy for the Black Sea allotted him three galleys: two great standard galleys bound for the long-established trading ports of Trebizond and Tana and a *galea sexti Romanie* bound for the newly opened market

61 ASVe, SDS, reg. 14, fols. 39r–v (9 June 1437). Immediately after entering into negotiations with the pope, the senators dismissed Simon de Valle, who returned to Basel; see ASVe, SDS, reg. 14, fol. 38v (4 June 1437).

62 ASVe, SDS, reg. 14, fol. 44r (25 June 1437).

63 On the transportation of the crossbowmen aboard the papal great galleys, see ASVe, CS, reg. 4, fols. 195v–196r (22 October 1437), and discussion below.

64 ASVe, CS, reg. 4, fol. 196r (22 October 1437); *Studi storici*, doc. 188 (1 March 1438), 576.

65 ASVe, SDS, reg. 14, loose folio dated 8 June 1437.

66 ASVe, SDM, reg. 60, fol. 84r (24 May 1438).

67 ASVe, SDM, reg. 60, fol. 84r (26 May 1438). It is uncertain whether Venice sent the two warships for the defense of Constantinople after the passing of the decree. In 1439, Constantine Dragases sent a letter from Morea to his brother in Italy, urging him to remind the pope to send the two warships he had promised; see D. M. Nicol, *The Immortal Emperor. The Life and Legend of Constantine Palaiologos, Last Emperor of the Romans* (Cambridge, UK, 1992), 15–16.

of Maurocastro.⁶⁸ However, because the pope had also requested a bastard galley, the Republic added one great galley to the original Black Sea convoy after the galleys' auction.⁶⁹ Inevitably, on 4 July the merchants who were awarded the galleys for the Black Sea complained before the Senate, claiming that "since, after the incanto, one bastard galley and three great galleys were promised to the Supreme Pontiff for the sea journey to Constantinople, which is the most profitable and long-standing market along the Black Sea route, we realize that the armament and assignment of those galleys would be of great inconvenience and financial loss due to both the transportation of the envoys and the cost of the rowers needed for those galleys."⁷⁰ The merchants

therefore petitioned the Senate for, and obtained, an exemption from the *galea sexti Romanie*, which had to transport the papal envoys, so that only three great galleys would sail to the Black Sea. Furthermore, because they complained about the financial loss that placing their three great galleys in the pope's service would cause, Venice had to provide the pope with three other great galleys.⁷¹ As agreed back in June, those galleys had to fly the Papal States' flag; thus, on 6 July the pope appointed his nephew Antonio Condulmer as general captain of the naval convoy, and on the very same day he issued a safe-conduct for the Byzantines for their expected arrival in Italy.⁷² From the time of Venice's decree on 25 June to provide a naval convoy to the Pope to the time when the Arsenal efficiently armed and fitted the galleys, only ten days passed.

The papal delegation to Constantinople consisted of three bishops of the *sanior pars*—Antonio, bishop of Porto; Pierre de Versailles, bishop of Digne; and the theologian Nicholas of Cusa—and two papal nuncios: Marco Condulmer, archbishop of Tarentaise, and Cristoforo Garatoni, bishop of Corone, who was appointed legate a latere.⁷³ At the beginning of July, the Byzantine ambassadors John Dishypatus and Manuel Boullotes reached Venice with the specific task of monitoring the galleys to make sure they were ready.⁷⁴ Around that time, the nuncios also arrived in Venice; the three delegates, who had left Bologna on 9 July, arrived a few days later. On 17 July Garatoni met with the senators and delivered the funds that the pope had entrusted to him for the salary of the crossbowmen, requesting that the men be from Crete (then a

68 ASVe, SDM, reg. 60, fols. 11r–12r (14 May 1437). The *incanto* system was a quintessentially Venetian state-operated mercantile operation developed by the republic since the beginning of the fourteenth century. Each year, the senators established a sale by auction (*incanto*) of the state-subsidized galleys that would sail in regular convoys (*mude*) to the Eastern and Western Mediterranean markets. The senators voted a decree (*ordo*) that established the number of convoys, the number of galleys in each convoy, the route, stops, departure and arrival date of the convoys, as well as the length of time at stops; the captain of the convoy, the ship-owner (*patronus*) and crew of each galley, along with their salaries, privileges, and food rations aboard; the armament, freights, and cargo to be traded. The *incanti* were published and posted on the Rialto bridge, where they were read out aloud to the Venetian populace by a crier (*preco*) standing on a bench. A day would be fixed for the auction, which also took place in Rialto, and only nobles were authorized to bid. Venetian merchants interested in the auction for a particular convoy would form a trade partnership that enabled them to afford the trade venture by sharing the capital and spreading the risk and financial losses among the partners (*partecipes*). Nobles, who put forward their names as ship-owners and were awarded a galley, would appear in front of the College of Forty and the Senate for the approval (*proba*) of their title; see Stöckly, *Le système de l'Incanto*, 49–64. The *sextus* or *sesto* is the mold identifying a particular galley design. The mold was a wooden template in the shape of the midship frame, and it was used in ship design to determine the shapes of the frames, which narrowed and raised along the keel towards the direction of the stern and stem post. On Venetian shipbuilding practice and ship design, see L. Campana, "Technical Experimentation in Ship Design during the Last Decades of the *Serenissima*," Gerolamo Maria Balbi's *Galea alla Ponentina*, *Technology and Culture* 57.1 (2016): 151–56.

69 ASVe, SDM, reg. 60, fol. 12r (14 May 1437).

70 ASVe, SDM, reg. 60, fols. 23v–24r (4 July 1437): *post suum incantum promise fuerunt Summopontefici una galia bastarda et tres galee grosse per viagio Constantinopolim quo est ille locus unde omnis utilitas et omne fundamentum totius viagii Romanie trahit, comprehendentes aptissime armamentum et accessum talium galearum fore sibi maximo incommode acque damno, tum propter homines passagii, tum propter caritundinem hominum a remo tot galeis necessiorum.*

71 ASVe, SDM, reg. 60, fol. 28v (30 July 1437) and fol. 30v (6 August 1437). The three great galleys granted to the pope were outside the *incanto* system and were not meant to carry on any trade along the route. This is made clear by the document dated 30 July 1437, in which the Senate forbade the papal galleys to load any merchandise or men so to avoid competition with the commercial convoy bound to Romania that was proceeding them.

72 For Antonio Condulmer's appointment, see *EP* 1:76–7, doc. 76 (6 July 1437); for the safe-conduct, see *ibid.*, 1:74–76, doc. 75 (6 July 1437). A very famous mariner, Michael of Rhodes, was part of the papal fleet as a *comito*, and he recorded the event; see Long, McGee, and Stahl, *The Book of Michael of Rhodes*, 2:278 (fol. 93r); see also Long, "Introduction": A. M. Stahl, "Michael of Rhodes: Mariner in Service to Venice," in *ibid.*, 3:92.

73 *EP* 1:82–83, doc. 83 (15 July 1437).

74 *Studi storici*, doc. 106 (15 February 1437).

Venetian overseas possession).⁷⁵ After the last preparations were concluded, the papal envoys departed from Venice: Garatoni and the bishops of Digne and Porto went aboard the bastard galley, while the bishop of Tarentaise and Nicholas of Cusa sailed with the three great galleys. By August the papal convoy was en route to Constantinople:

The Supreme Pontiff requested to be armed in this our city of Venice four galleys: one bastard galley, which departed several days ago, carrying the Council of Basel's and the Constantinopolitan emperor's ambassadors with the appropriate amount of money for the salary of 300 crossbowmen in Crete, who, as agreed, had to be paid there and had to be carried to Constantinople to protect that city. However, the other three great galleys have to transport to Italy—to Venice, as we believe—the emperor of Constantinople, the patriarch, and the other dignitaries for the future council. Likewise, the three great galleys with the Supreme Pontiff's ambassadors and the Byzantine ambassadors, set sail recently.⁷⁶

75 ASVe, SDS, reg. 14, fol. 46v (17 July 1437). Since the first half of the fourteenth century, Venice relied less and less on conscripted citizens, and more and more on mercenary auxiliaries, both in land and naval warfare. In 1372–73, during the Venetian–Genoese Wars, the Republic hired *balisterios* . . . *de Candia quos Mortatos appellabant* to fight against Padua; see L. Muratori, ed., *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, 25 vols. (Milan, 1723–51), 19: col. 749. On the *mourtatoi* (Turkoman foot archers) see M. Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army: Arms and Society, 1204–1453* (Philadelphia, 1992), 276–78. By the beginning of the fifteenth century, crossbowmen were regularly in service in the Venetian navy. Venetian maritime legislation established that a squadron of 30 crossbowmen sailed aboard each galley; see, for example, ASVe, SDM, reg. 46, fol. 59r (12 December 1402) and fols. 117r–v (29 November 1403). The salary of each crossbowman amounted to 12 *yperperi*, and a three-month salary was paid in advance; see *ibid.*, fol. 157r (2 August 1404). Crossbows were the most important missile weapon of naval warfare until the introduction of harquebus and cannon in the sixteenth century; see F. C. Lane, “The Crossbow in the Nautical Revolution of the Middle Ages,” *Explorations in Economic History* 7.1–2 (1969): 169.

76 ASVe, CS, reg. 4, fol. 137v (12 August 1437): *Summus Pontifex armari fecit in hac civitate nostra Venetiarum galeas IIII, videlicet una bastardam, que iam pluribus diebus recessit, cum qua iverunt legati sui ac concilii Basiliensis et imperatoris Constantinopolitani, cum pecunia oportuna pro stipendiando in Creta ballistarios trecentos, quos concessimus ibi posse stipendiari, conducendos Constantinopolim, pro custodia illius civitatis. Alias autem tres galeas grossas pro conducendo in Italiam*

The bastard galley, commanded by Hector Pasqualigo, was sent ahead so that it could arrive in Crete before the rest of the convoy and attend to hiring the crossbowmen, who would board the great galleys there and proceed to Constantinople. Pierre de Versailles wrote,

On 26 July we boarded the galley and sat sail to Constantinople. Rowing nonstop, we arrived in Crete the morning of 15 August, which is the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin; after being received with honor by the duke and solemnly escorted to church, we remained there for four days to assemble the crossbowmen who had to protect the city of Constantinople and were to board the great galleys sailing after us. Then, sailing back through several islands, we arrived in Constantinople on 3 September.⁷⁷

John of Ragusa, who was in Constantinople and witnessed the arrival of the bishops, wrote, “On 3 September the galley carrying the bishop of Corone, Digne, and Porto, which is called a ‘bastard,’ arrived” (fig. 4).⁷⁸ On 15 September John VIII received Pierre de Versailles and Garatoni, who guaranteed that all the conditions of the *Sicut pia mater* decree had been fulfilled and thus invited the emperor to arrange for his departure. In the following days, “the emperor armed two galleys and was impatiently waiting for the other galleys of His Beatitude, so to go to the Council with

et, sicuti credimus, Venetias imperatorem Constantinopolitanum ac patriarcham et prelatos suos pro future concilio. Que tres galee grosse cum aliquibus oratoribus Summi Pontifici et aliquibus Grecis simili modo novissime recesserunt.

77 *Studi storici*, doc. 188 (1 March 1438), 570–71: *Intravimus siquidem galeam, et incepimus navigare XXVI iulii. Continue remigando, Candie applicuimus in ortu solis XV die augusti, qua celebrator festivitas Assumptionis Beatissime Virginis; ubi, honorifice recepti a ducali potestate et in ecclesiam solemniter deducti, per quatuor dies pro congregandis balistariis in custodiam civitatis Constantinopolitane et quos grosse galee nos sequentes debebant assumere, illic stetimus. Postea, retro cursu navigantes et per diversas insulas, tertia septembris Constantinopolim venimus.* See also ASVe, CS, reg. 4, fol. 137v (12 August 1437). On the bastard galley of Hector Pasqualigo, see ASVe, CS, reg. 4, fol. 203r (27 October 1437).

78 *Studi storici*, doc. 178 (29 January 1438), 507: *Tertia die septembris apparuit quaedam galea dicta bastarda, in qua vehebantur domini episcopi Coronensis, Dignensis et Portugalensis.*

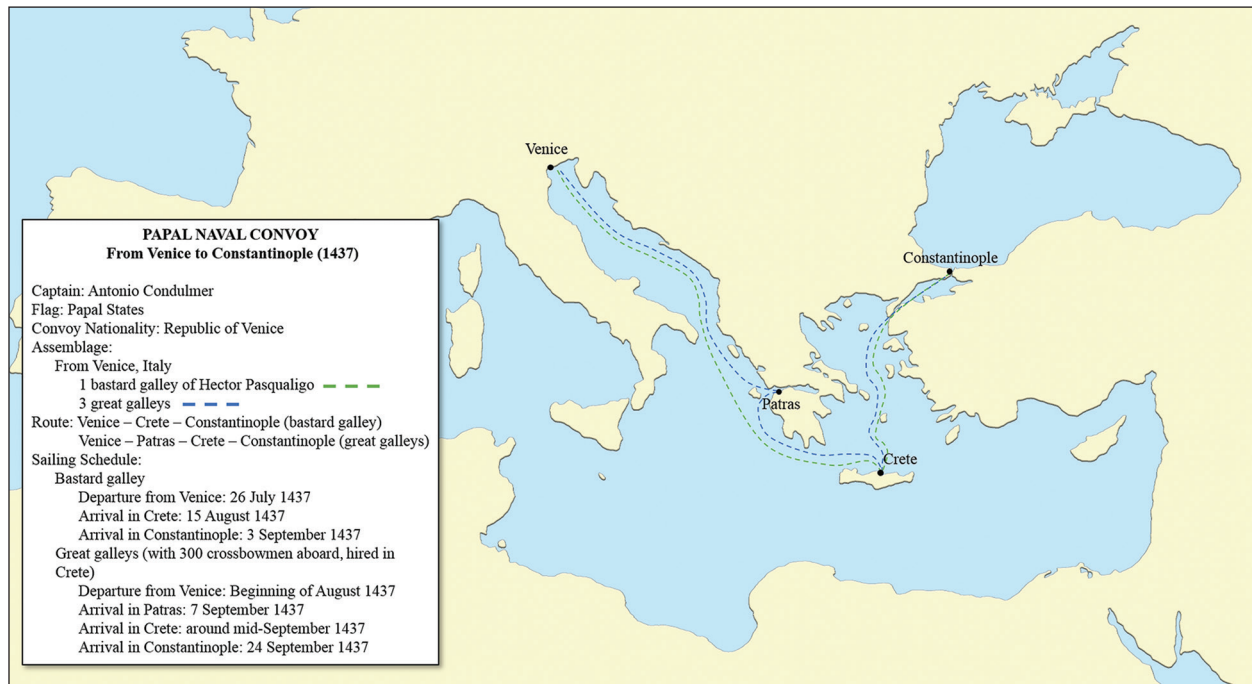


Fig. 4. Logistics and assemblage of the papal naval convoy from Venice to Constantinople (1437). Drawing by the author.

the Greek religious dignitaries who had gathered there in great number.”⁷⁹ Pierre de Versailles noted that for the three weeks following the arrival of the bastard galley, “preparations were made to arm two light galleys and one great galley of the emperor.”⁸⁰ The two light galleys armed by John VIII were intended to remain in Constantinople to protect the city, whereas the third galley was meant to transport him to Italy.

During that time, the three great galleys bearing the archbishop of Tarentaise and Nicholas of Cusa were en route to Constantinople. On 7 September they arrived in Patras, where they took aboard the despot Constantin Dragases and his secretary, Sphrantzes. The despot—brother of John VIII and future emperor as Constantine XI Palaiologos—was summoned to Constantinople to take the regency of the empire while John VIII was abroad. From Patras the three great

galleys sailed to Crete to collect the crossbowmen; they reached Constantinople on 24 September.⁸¹

After all the papal galleys had arrived and the Byzantines were making the final preparations for their sea journey to Italy, a coup de theatre occurred in Constantinople. On 3 October a second naval convoy with Roman Catholic Church banners and flags was seen approaching the imperial city. The *major pars* of Basel, led by Aleman, had sent galleys to Constantinople carrying the bishops of Viseu and Lausanne, as well as ambassadors of the French king, Charles VII, and of the Duke of Savoy, Amadeus VII. The arrival of the French envoys caused great panic in John of Ragusa, who realized that the reputation of the Western church would be undermined, and the unity of the two churches could be jeopardized, if the Greeks knew of the dissent between the Council of Basel and the pope. Pierre de Versailles recorded, “On 4 October the arrival of some galleys of the Avignonesi with the bishop of Viseu, the bishop Ludovico from Padule of Lausanne,

79 ASVe, CS, reg. 4, fol. 196r (22 October 1437): *imperator armaverat duas galeas et expectabat cum desiderio reliquas galeas Beatitudine Sue ut, cum prelati grecis, qui in copioso numero ibi convenerant, veniret at concilium.*

80 *Studi storici*, doc. 188 (1 March 1438), 576: *preparamenta ad armandum duas galeas subtiles et unam grossam Imperatoris.*

81 ASVe, CS, reg. 4, fols. 195v–196r (22 October 1437); see also J. B. Papadopoulos, ed., *Georgii Phrantzae Chronicon* (Leipzig, 1933), 160b–163b.

and soldiers of Nicodus of Mentone, who declared they were the ambassadors sent by the Council of Basel, left the Byzantines stunned. They were saying: How dare they to come?"⁸²

The arrival of the council's naval convoy was not completely unexpected, however. Around 24 June, the Genoese consul of Damascus had arrived in Constantinople, asserting that in Genoa he had seen some galleys being armed to be sent to Constantinople on behalf of the council.⁸³ By mid-August, the rumors that the council was preparing a naval convoy for the Byzantines had reached Venice, causing alarm. The senators wrote to Marco Dandolo, the Venetian ambassador to King Sigismund: "We have also received the news that some galleys—to be sent to Constantinople for the very same reason [i.e., to transport the Byzantines to Italy]—have been armed in Provence, as it is hoped that the council would be transferred to Avignon. It is unknown what is going to happen."⁸⁴

The arrival of the council galleys provoked rage among the papal envoys. As recorded by John of Ragusa, the captain of the papal convoy, Antonio Condulmer, reacted vehemently and was ready to attack:

Immediately, having heard of the arrival of the Council galleys, the Captain of the papal galleys began to arm his fleet to attack the Council galleys, as the common murmur and the people's cry called for battle. When the Emperor realized it, he at once sent the order to the Captain to leave the galleys and do nothing. However, he refused to leave the galleys and to desist from arming, and, on the contrary, he was completely ready as if he wanted to attack our galleys.⁸⁵

82 *Studi storici*, doc. 188 (1 March 1438), 576–77: *quarta octobris galee Avinionenses, in quibus errant domini episcopi Visensis et dominus Ludovicus de Padule, qui se dicit Lausanensis, et miles dominus Nicodus de Mentone, se dicentes ambassiatores sacri Concilii Basiliensis, quarum galearum adventus grecorum fuit in admirationem. Dicebant enim: Qua confidentia veniunt isti?*

83 *Studi storici*, doc. 178 (29 January 1438), 505.

84 ASVe, CS, reg. 4, fol. 137v (12 August 1437): *Sentimus etiam quod in Provincia armature aliquae galee pro hac ipsa causa iture Constantinopolim, ut experiantur quod ipsum consilium in Avinionem transferatur. Quid succederet debeat est incertum.*

85 *Studi storici*, doc. 178 (29 January 1438), 511–12: *Statim autem, audito adventu dictarum galearum Concilii, Capitaneus galearum Papae coepit armare classem suam ad invadendum galeas Concilii, ut communis rumor et clamor populi insonabat. Quod cum Imperator*

At last, John VIII granted the council's convoy a permit to moor the ships inside the harbor and decided to receive the bishops of Viseu and Lausanne, although he found himself in a very difficult situation. The French bishops invited John VIII and the Byzantine delegation to board their galleys to travel to the council, which they planned to hold in Avignon, in Basel, or somewhere in Savoy. After the papal ambassadors spent the next two weeks in private meetings with the emperor and the patriarch, the diplomatic incident finally came to a resolution. Reconfirming the authority of the minority decree in front of the French bishops, John VIII claimed that the Fathers of Basel had not fulfilled the three main conditions approved in 1436, since the ships had arrived after 31 May, none of the proposed cities was included in the decree, and they could not guarantee the presence of the pope.⁸⁶ In contrast, all the terms of the *Sicut pia mater* decree had been fulfilled by the pope: John VIII thus announced that he and his delegates would sail to Italy on the Venetian galleys armed by the pope.⁸⁷ As he had initially planned, John VIII "resolved to sail aboard his own galley [sailing along] with the papal convoy."⁸⁸ The council galleys were eventually released by the emperor; on 1 November they departed from Constantinople, sailing back to Provence empty.⁸⁹

After this diplomatic incident, John VIII became concerned for the safety of his person and his delegation. He therefore decided to wait for the three Venetian great galleys that had been sent to the Black Sea markets during the past summer and were to stop in Constantinople on their way back to Venice, so that the combined papal and Venetian merchant convoys could sail together to Italy.⁹⁰ This decision delayed the departure of the Byzantine naval convoy, however. The great galleys from Maurocastro and Tana arrived

percepisset, statim misit ad Capitaneum praedictum mandando ut exiret galeas, et quod nullam facere novitatem. Qui tamen nec exire galeas nec desistere ab armature voluit, sed praeparavit se totaliter, quasi vellet aggredi nostras. After this episode, the council envoys sent a messenger aboard the papal galleys, but the messenger was tortured and murdered; see *Studi storici*, doc. 179 (31 January 1438), 526.

86 *Studi storici*, doc. 178 (29 January 1438).

87 ASVe, CS, reg. 4, fol. 226r (7 December 1437).

88 *Studi storici*, doc. 179 (30 January 1438), 534: *Imperatorem conclusisse ire in galea sua propria cum galeis Pape.*

89 ASVe, CS, reg. 4, fol. 232r (21 December 1437).

90 ASVe, CS, reg. 4, fol. 226r (7 December 1437).

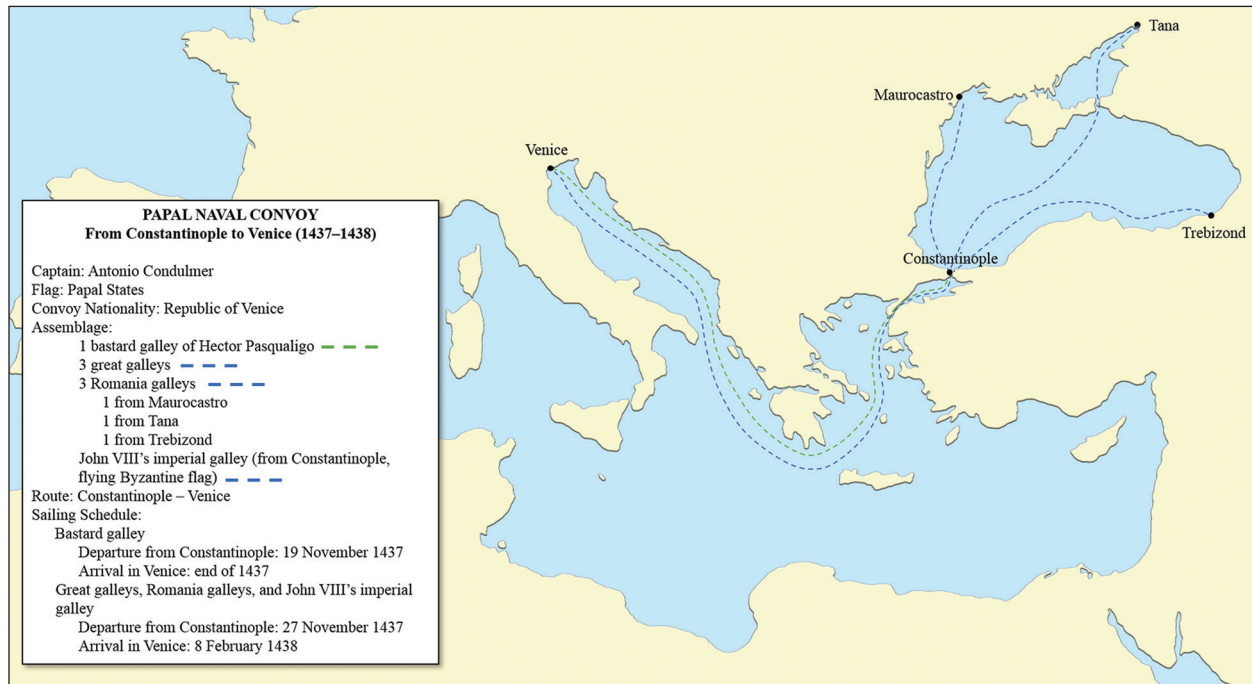


Fig. 5. Logistics and assemblage of the papal naval convoy from Constantinople to Venice (1437–38). Drawing by the author.

in Constantinople on 5 November 1437, but the great galley from Trebizond was still en route.⁹¹ Before its arrival, on 19 November members of the imperial family boarded the bastard galley of the papal fleet and departed from Constantinople, arriving safely first in Corfu and eventually in Venice toward the end of 1437.⁹² The Byzantine naval convoy—three great galleys funded by the pope, three Romania galleys, and the imperial galley—left Constantinople on 27 November.⁹³

The Byzantine naval convoy arrived in Venice early on the morning of Saturday, 8 February 1438 (fig. 5). The emperor's galley, a swifter ship, surpassed the rest of the convoy and dropped anchor at around 8 a.m. in front of the Benedictine monastery of San Nicolò at Lido; the other galleys arrived two hours later and

anchored at the Old Arsenal.⁹⁴ But as the Byzantine naval convoy had arrived somewhat unexpectedly, Doge Foscari asked the emperor and the patriarch to remain on their galleys for the night so that he could receive them the next day with all due honors and great pomp, and then escort them to their lodgings.⁹⁵ On the morning of 9 February, at around 11, a dozen festive barges accompanied the doge on his grand ceremonial barge, the bucentaur, which displayed highly decorated golden carvings and imperial flags on both sides.⁹⁶ The triumphal reception of the Byzantines lasted until midnight, and they were welcomed by the sound of music and trumpet calls, and by the acclamations of the

91 ASVe, CS, reg. 4, fols. 225v–226r (7 December 1437).

92 ASVe, CS, reg. 4, fols. 231v–232r (21 December 1437); see *ibid.*, fols. 195v–196r (22 October 1437).

93 *Mémoires*, 198 (IV.2:3–5). Syropoulos also mentions a Florentine galley, but this galley was not part of the original convoy, as it sailed a different route after the stop at Madytos (Eceabat, Turkey); see *Mémoires*, 200 (IV.5:20).

94 AG 1:1. See also *Mémoires*, 213 (IV.16:24–26). On the arrival of the Byzantines in Venice, see ASVe, CS, reg. 4, fol. 246r (10 February 1438, 1437 more veneto) and ASVe, SDM, reg. 60, fol. 57v (14 February 1438, 1437 more veneto).

95 While in Venice, the emperor stayed in the house of the Marquess of Ferrara at San Giacomo dall'Orto (known today as the Fondaco dei Turchi), and the patriarch was lodged on the island of Saint George; see ASVe, SDM, reg. 60, fol. 46r (3 December 1437). See also Romano, *The Likeness of Venice*, 135–36; *Mémoires*, 212–18 (IV.16–22).

96 AG 1:2–3.

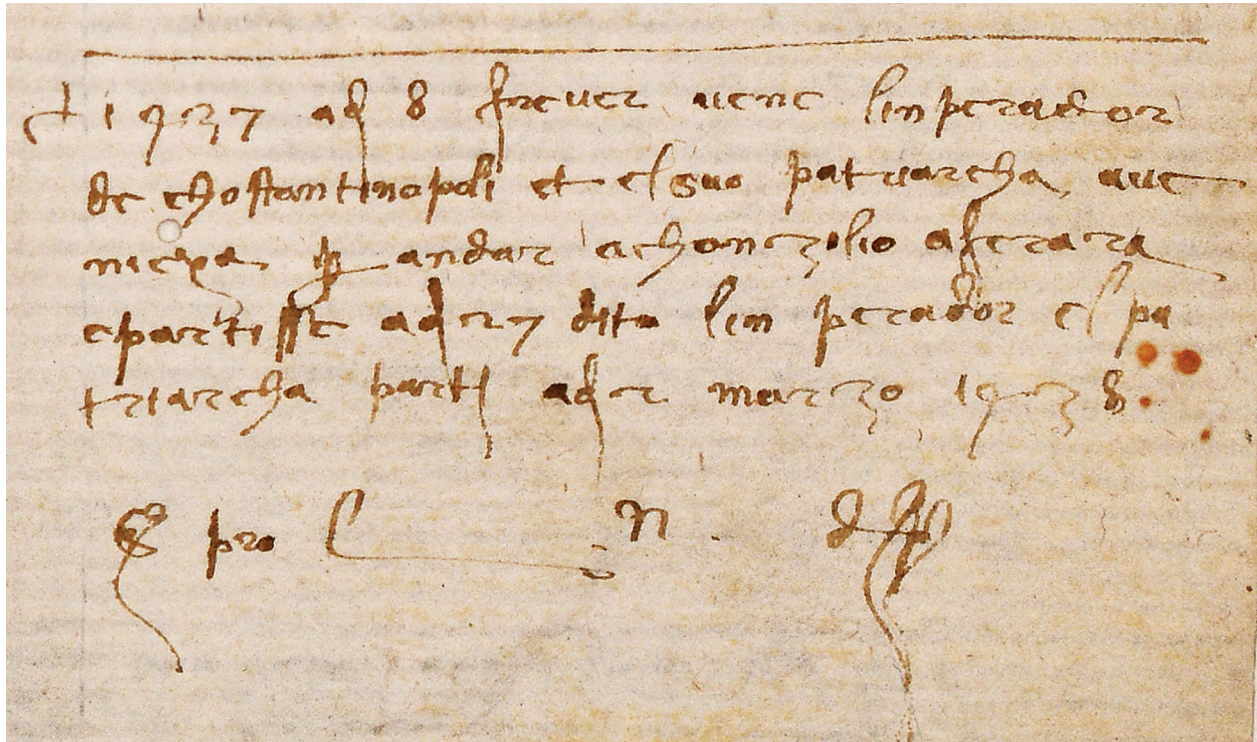


Fig. 6. Bergamo, Biblioteca Civica Angelo Mai, MA 334, fol. 111r.

crowd on the streets and from balconies.⁹⁷ Among the Venetians who were present at the celebrations was an anonymous witness who recorded in his notebook: “On 8 February 1437 [i.e., 1438], the emperor of Constantinople and the patriarch arrived in Venice to participate in the council of Ferrara. The emperor departed [from Venice] on 27 February, whereas the patriarch departed on 2 March 1438” (fig. 6).⁹⁸

Both the emperor and the patriarch remained in Venice for almost a month; their arrival at the Council of Ferrara, which had opened on 8 January 1438, was delayed because they fell ill for a few days, probably

around 18 February.⁹⁹ On 28 February the emperor left Venice by boat, via Chioggia; navigating the Po River up to Francolino, he reached Ferrara by horse on 4 March.¹⁰⁰ Owing to the lack of suitable ships, the patriarch left Venice by the same route on 2 March, joining the pope and the emperor in Ferrara five days later.¹⁰¹ The council, which was moved to Florence in 1439 when a plague hit Ferrara, saw the reconciliation of the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches over their doctrinal differences, thus ending, at least for a short time, the schism between them.¹⁰²

The Return to Constantinople and the *galea Imperatoris*

When the *Sicut pia mater* decree was issued in 1434, the Byzantines complained that nothing in the terms

97 A. Caracciolo Aricò, ed., *Marin Sanuto il Giovane: Vite dei Dogi, 1423–1474* (Venice, 1999), 162–63.

98 Bergamo, Biblioteca Civica Angelo Mai, MA 334, fol. 111r: “1437 a dì 8 fevrer vene l’inperador de Chostantinopoli et el suo patriarcha a Veniexa per andar al chonzilio a Ferara, e partise a dì 27 dito l’inperador, el patriarcha partj a dì 2 marzo 1438.” Written in Venetian dialect by several hands from the early fourteenth century to the mid-fifteenth century, the manuscript MA 334 consists of 24 short treatises devoted to seafaring, navigation, commercial arithmetic, astronomy, and geometry. This entry is the only biographical reference recorded in the entire manuscript, which is still unpublished.

99 *Studi storici*, doc. 186 (25 February 1438).

100 *AG* 1:6–8.

101 *AG* 1:8–9.

102 Once in Constantinople, the Byzantines rejected the union; see Gill, *The Council of Florence* (note 1 above), 349–88.

addressed their return to Constantinople should the union of the two churches not be reached. The text was later amended in the 1436 additio, which decreed that the Latin church would provide for the transportation and cover all the expenses no matter the outcome. However, the union of the Latin and Greek churches was achieved in Florence on 6 July 1439 with great celebration. On that morning, the pope led a sumptuous procession from the episcopal palace to the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore; there the Mass was celebrated in the presence of both Latin and Greek religious personages and the entire Florentine populace, which was crowded outside. After the usual ceremonies were performed and the Mass was finished, two cardinals, Giuliano Cesarini and Basilios Bessarion, ascended the pulpit near the papal chair to read out the decree of the union, *Laetentur coeli*, both in Greek and in Latin, and the pope replied, “Placet.”¹⁰³

After the celebration, the Byzantines, slowly and in separate groups, headed back to Venice for their return to Constantinople. On 26 August John VIII, accompanied by the theologian Mark of Ephesus, left Florence and traveled to Venice, where he arrived on 6 September.¹⁰⁴ Preparations to assemble a naval convoy for the return voyage had started as early as June, while the Byzantines were still in Florence, attending the final days of the council. Toward the end of June, the emperor had sent a letter to Venice requesting three Romania galleys to escort him back to Constantinople; but the Venetian senators replied,

At present, we do not have any such galleys available, and we need those that we have; however, we are willing to please and satisfy the requests of His Serenity the emperor, although against our interest, and we are ready to prepare three hulls of galleys with their fittings so that they would be armed, as he requests, and we inform them [the Byzantines] that these galleys would be a great galley; the second, a Romania galley; and the third, a bastard galley. And since they request being escorted by Romania galleys, we reply that if Romania galleys delay their departure beyond the usual date, these [galleys]—as well as the merchants and all our

city—would suffer great damage for several reasons, and, most of all, because they won’t be able to reach Tana.¹⁰⁵

This decision was evidently dictated by Venice’s pragmatism, which prioritized trade and its profit over the Byzantines, especially because it was difficult to synchronize the departure of two different naval convoys—one of the Byzantines and the other bound for the Black Sea—without disrupting trade in the Levant. In 1439 three great merchant galleys were allotted for the Black Sea: two Romania galleys and a great galley bound to Tana.¹⁰⁶ Their departure had already been delayed because they were waiting for the arrival of the galleys from the Flanders markets, bearing northern European cargo to trade with the Black Sea. To avoid further delay, the senators urged the galley bound for Tana to leave no later than 15 July, and to sail up to Tenedos in a convoy with two galleys bound for Crete.¹⁰⁷

Around the same time, on 11 July, the pope asked the Medici for a loan of 6,000 florins to be paid to Venice for preparing the galleys.¹⁰⁸ Although these funds did not reach Venice until much later, on 1 August the Arsenal began arming the galleys granted to the emperor.¹⁰⁹ The departure of the Byzantine naval convoy was probably scheduled for mid-September, but the complex logistics, the lack of funds, and a series of mishaps further delayed it until mid-October. On 13 September the imperial galley—which John VIII had left in Venice after sailing on it to Italy—was blessed for the upcoming departure. Afterward, it was

105 ASVe, SDS, reg. 14, fols. 209r–v (23 June 1439): *Ad presens simus non bene fulciti talibus galeis, et ille, quas habemus, nobis essent necessarie, attamen cupientes ea facere, que serenitati ipsius domini imperatoris grata et accepta sint, licet sit cum nostro incomodo, parati sumus ei accomodare tria corpora galearum fulcita, ut ea armare valeat, sicut dicit, et declaretur eis, quod dicte galee erunt una grossa, altera Romanie et tercia bastarda. Et quia petunt, ut galee Romanie eos associant, respondeatur, quod si galee Romanie different earum recessum ultra solitum tempus, esset maximum damnum eidem ac mercatoribus et universe civitati nostre multis de causis, et specialiter, quia accedere non possent Tanam.*

106 ASVe, SDM, reg. 60, fol. 148r (30 May 1439).

107 ASVe, SDM, reg. 60, fol. 155r (30 June 1439). A second senatorial decree postponed the departure of the galley to Tana until 18 July; see ASVe, SDM, reg. 60, fol. 160v (13 July 1439). On the two galleys bound to Crete, see ASVe, SDM, reg. 60, fols. 159r–v (11 July 1439).

108 EP 2:86, doc. 194 (11 July 1439); see also ACA, doc. 78 (14 July 1439; the amount requested is 6,240 florins).

109 ASVe, SDM, reg. 60, fol. 164r (1 August 1439).

103 COGD 2:1212–18.

104 Mémoires, 524 (XI.4:26–27).

moored in the lagoon inside the Arsenal, ready to set sail in the next few days.¹¹⁰ But late that night or early the next morning, a fire broke out inside the Arsenal, probably caused by an explosion in the Powder House; some weaponry and several galleys burned, including the imperial galley.¹¹¹ Immediately after this incident, on 15 September, John VIII asked the senators for two additional light galleys “for his own greater safety and for the honor of his own person.”¹¹² The Senate granted him the *galea Justiniana*, which had recently returned from Tana, and a light galley to serve as his new imperial galley. The latter was newly built by Giorgio Palopano, a shipwright of Rhodian origin who was in charge of constructing a small flotilla of light galleys to be sent to Lake Garda during the war against Milan.¹¹³ Two days later, on 17 September, the Senate granted a new *galea Imperatoris* to John VIII, and Giorgio Palopano was commissioned “to build three galleys on the same design of the imperial galley” for Lake Garda.¹¹⁴ Unquestionably, Giorgio Palopano built the *galea Imperatoris*, although he did so using the design of his father Nicola Palopano, since in 1437 the Senate had decreed that all light galleys built thereafter had to conform to his design.¹¹⁵

The information about the imperial galleys presented thus far necessitates a brief digression into a new investigation of Filarete’s bronze plaques from Old Saint Peter’s depicting the arrival and the departure of John VIII—the only iconographic source at our disposal regarding the imperial galleys. Filarete seemed

aware of the fact that John VIII sailed to Italy aboard his own galley but used a Venetian light galley for his return, as the panels in the 1445 bronze doors in Old St. Peter’s clearly show two different types of galley. Peter Bell has erroneously commented on Filarete’s rendition of the emperor’s galleys that “the gap between the representation on the door and the historical event is obvious.”¹¹⁶ On the contrary, Filarete’s representations are historically accurate. The panel depicting the emperor’s departure from Constantinople shows a galley carrying Byzantine insignia decorated with the double-headed eagle, such as the awning covering the canopy at the stern and the banner hanging from the bow (see fig. 1). Judging from the oar arrangements and from the two lateen-rigged masts, this galley is without doubt a bireme-rowed galley,¹¹⁷ although some scholars have had difficulty correctly identifying it. Bell declared that it is a Venetian Romania galley, a claim disproved both by the historical records and by the iconographical features of the galley, while Michel Mallett mistakenly asserted that it is a Byzantine dromon.¹¹⁸ In fact, the dromon had fallen into disuse in the fifteenth century because of the introduction of galleys, and the term itself had begun to disappear from Byzantine narratives in the late twelfth century (replaced with *katargon*, which eventually came to mean “war galley”). More importantly, the ship depicted by Filarete has an outrigger, a feature introduced in the thirteenth century that was not present in dromones.¹¹⁹

110 *Mémoires*, 524 (XI.4:27–30) and 526 (XI.4:1–2). On the imperial galley left in Venice, see ASVe, SDM, reg. 60, fol. 84r (26 May 1438).

111 *Mémoires*, 526 (XI.4:2–5).

112 ASVe, SDM, reg. 60, fol. 169v (15 September 1439): *pro maiori eius securitate et pro honore suo*.

113 These galleys, prefabricated by Palopano in the Arsenal, were hauled in pieces over the top of the mountains and assembled on the shore of Lake Garda. It was a titanic enterprise requiring more than 2,000 oxen and 200 wagons; but in the end a flotilla of 6 light galleys and 25 smaller long ships was hauled over the mountains in 15 days.

114 ASVe, SDM, reg. 60, fol. 170r (17 September 1439): *facere tre galeas mensure illius cuius est galea Imperatoris*. Mistakenly, Bondioli and Penzo claim that the imperial galley mentioned in this document is the galley aboard which John VIII sailed to Italy in 1437–38 and that it was built by Nicola Palopano. In addition, they transcribed *cuius* as *eius*; see Bondioli and Penzo, “Teodoro Baxon” (note 17 above), 77.

115 ASVe, SDM, reg. 60, fol. 171r (4 June 1437).

116 P. Bell, “Journey from Historical Event to Visual Representation: The Galley of John Palaiologos VIII on Filarete’s Bronze Door for Old St. Peter,” in *Vom Anker zum Krähennest: Nautische Bildwelten von der Renaissance bis zum Zeitalter der Fotografie*, ed. N. Hegener and L. U. Scholl (Bremen, 2011), 100.

117 J. H. Pryor and E. M. Jeffreys, *The Age of the Dromon: The Byzantine Navy ca. 500–1204* (Leiden, 2006), 430.

118 Bell, “Journey from Historical Event to Visual Representation,” 99–100; M. E. Mallett, *The Florentine Galley in the Fifteenth Century* (Oxford, 1967), 69, plate 6.

119 The outrigger is a rectangular wooden structure superimposed on a galley that allows for an extended oar system; see J. H. Pryor, “From Dromon to Galea: Mediterranean Bireme Galleys, AD 500–1300,” in the *Age of the Galley: Mediterranean Oared Vessels since Pre-Classical Times*, ed. R. Gardiner (London, 1995), 104. On the demise of the dromon as also reflected in Byzantine sources, see Pryor and Jeffreys, *The Age of the Dromon*, 407–21. The galley depicted by Filarete strictly resembles the Roman biremes shown on the Column of Trajan in its oar arrangement. While Byzantine galleys were single-banked, Roman biremes were two-banked vessels. It is safe to assume that Filarete was unaware of this structural

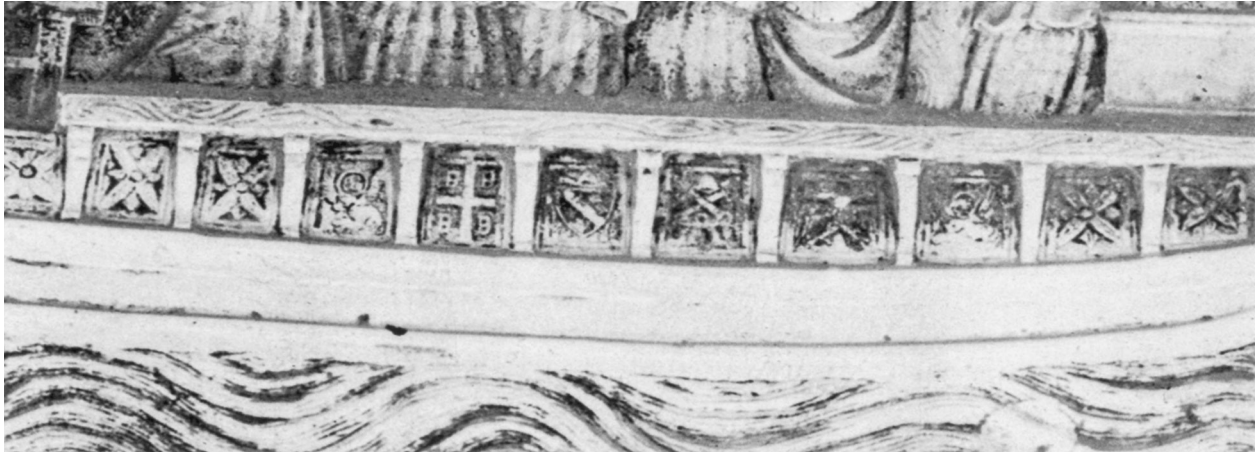


Fig. 7. Coats of arms carved in the *galea Imperatoris*. Bronze door by Antonio Averlino (Filarete), Saint Peter Basilica, Rome. Alinari / Art Resource, NY.

In the bronze panel showing the departure of John VIII from Venice, on the other hand, the Byzantine insignia with the double-headed eagle has disappeared (see fig. 2). Archival sources, as noted above, record that John VIII was granted a newly built light galley as his *galea Imperatoris*. The representation of this ship corresponds to the historical sources: its single lateen-rigged mast indicates that the ship is a light galley. The oars are not shown, probably because Filarete wanted to show the decoration below the bulwark, between the outrigger knees. That decoration consists of 10 *formelle*, or panels. The central six, which are flanked by two *formelle* with floral motifs on either side, display several coats of arms: from left to right, the Lion of Saint Mark, symbol of Venice; the tetragrammatic cross with the letter *B* (capital beta) repeated in each corner, which represents the Palaiologan dynasty; a shield with a diagonal band, representing Eugenius V's personal coat of arm; the keys of Saint Peter, representing the papal coat of arms; the double-headed eagle emblem of the Byzantine Empire; and another Lion of Saint Mark (fig. 7). Bell has suggested that the heraldic emblems symbolize the unity of the two churches.¹²⁰ This might be true for the four central *formelle*, representing the Byzantine and papal

emblems; but the two side *formelle* with the Lion of Saint Mark do not fall into this interpretive scheme, since archival sources document that it is, indeed, a Venetian galley. It is therefore hard to believe that the ship is a metonymic representation of the entire naval convoy, as Bell suggests.¹²¹ The correct identification of the two ships—the first, a Byzantine single bank, bireme-rowed galley; the second, a Venetian light galley—demonstrates that Filarete intended to precisely depict the imperial galley, in both instances. Historical sources indicate that John VIII sailed aboard his own galley to Italy, that the Byzantine naval convoys assembled by the pope consisted mostly of great galleys, and that the only light galley included in the convoy for the return voyage was the one granted to John VIII.¹²²

Seven hundred Byzantines leaving Florence for Venice had to be taken care of. On 24 September the pope hired the pilgrim galley of Andrea Gritti to transport the emperor's entourage and family back to Constantinople. Because it was unprofitable for a galley to sail empty, the Senate granted Gritti permission to carry with him any goods he wished, except slaves.¹²³

distinction and might have modeled his Byzantine galley on the representation on the Column of Trajan.

120 Bell, "Journey from Historical Event to Visual Representation," 99.

121 Ibid.

122 If this judgment is correct, then we can infer that Filarete worked on the panels depicting the departure and the return voyage only after the pope returned to Rome in 1443; see also R. Glass, "Filarete's *Hilaritas*: Claiming Authorship and Status on the Doors of St. Peter's," *Art Bulletin* 94.4 (2012): 566.

123 ASVe, SDM, reg. 60, fol. 170v (26 September 1439).

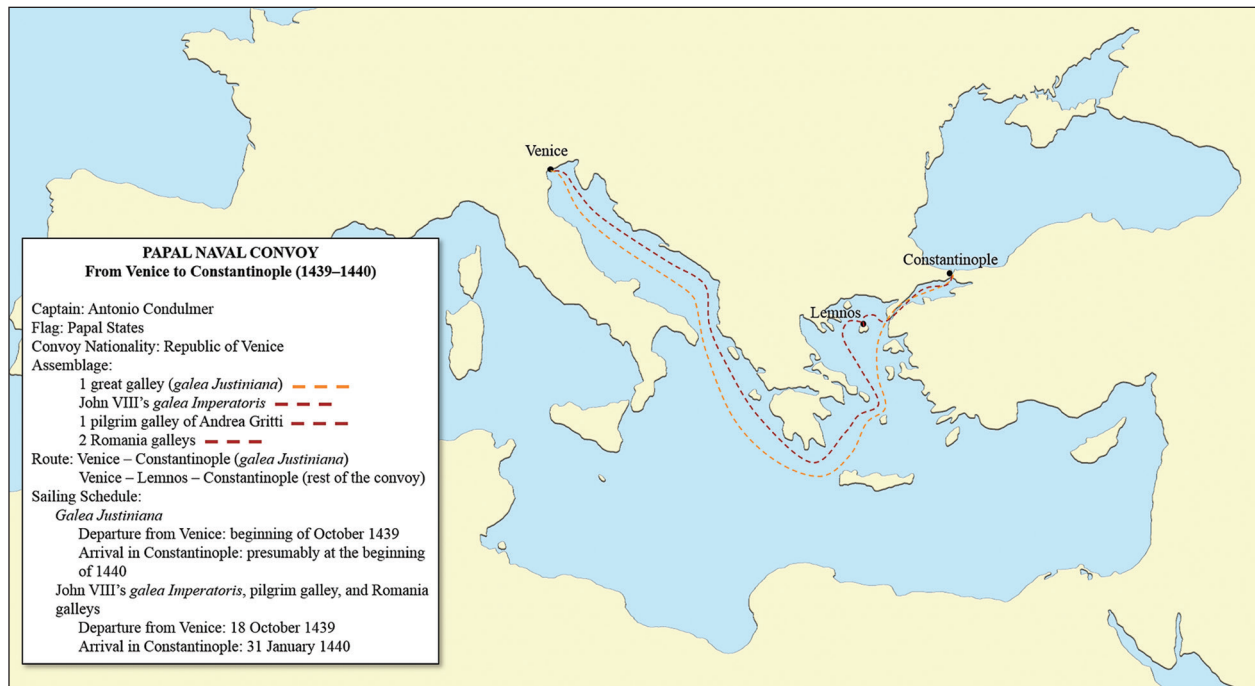


Fig. 8. Logistics and assemblage of the papal naval convoy from Venice to Constantinople (1439–40). Drawing by the author.

This permission was withdrawn, however, when the merchants of the galleys bound for the Beirut and Alexandria markets complained to the senators, who ultimately allowed Gritti to carry only those goods that could not fit in the other galleys.¹²⁴ Whereas the *galea Justiniana* had left Venice at the beginning of October, on 9 October John VIII requested two great Romania galleys for his large delegation, asking for permission to stop on the island of Lemnos for three or four days at his own expense.¹²⁵ As Syropoulos noted, each Romania galley had to carry 100 people.¹²⁶ Finally, the Byzantine naval convoy for the return voyage was assembled: two Romania galleys, the pilgrim galley of Andrea Gritti, and the imperial galley, all captained once again by Antonio Condulmer, the pope's nephew.¹²⁷ John VIII

and his delegation departed from Venice on 19 October 1439 and, after a perilous voyage, they arrived safely in Constantinople on 31 January 1440 (fig. 8).¹²⁸



The transportation of the Byzantine delegation to Italy for the Council of Ferrara–Florence, and then back to Constantinople, was a massive undertaking that required considerable financial resources, largely but not exclusively devoted to providing naval convoys. The complexities of the negotiations were made more difficult by the distance between the parties involved and the resultant time required for information, including

124 ASVe, SDM, reg. 60, fol. 172v (9 October 1439).

125 ASVe, SDM, reg. 60, fol. 172r (4 and 9 October 1439), fol. 173r (13 October 1439), and fol. 173r (17 October 1439).

126 *Mémoires*, 532 (XI.11:10).

127 Michael of Rhodes sailed as a comito in the Byzantine naval convoy back to Constantinople. The entry he wrote in his book confirms the type and numbers of ships forming the convoy; see Long, McGee, and Stahl, *The Book of Michael of Rhodes* (note 10 above), 2:280 (fol. 93v). The accounting register written by Antonio

Condulmer on this voyage provides information about expenses and salaries; see ASVe, Spirito Santo, Pergamene, busta 4. Not all 700 Byzantines traveled back to Constantinople with the emperor: some of them had already left, and some others remained in Italy. Two hundred Byzantines sailed on board the two Romania galleys; a pilgrim galley could accommodate more than 200 men, and the imperial galley could carry 100 men.

128 *Mémoires*, 532–44 (XI.12–23); see also EP 3:17–21, doc. 243 (25 August 1440). On the return voyage plagued by many storms and delays, see Long, “Introduction” (note 72 above), 19–20.

decisions, to be transmitted between them. Such delays in communication proved decisive: they both made it more difficult for the Fathers of Basel to anticipate the pope's political maneuvering and provided Eugenius IV with an edge over the fathers. In 1438 the pope succeeded in dispatching Venetian galleys to Constantinople, thereby outplaying the fathers and steering the events in his favor. Certainly, the pope could count on his solid network of allies—mainly in Florence, which provided loans, and in Venice, which provided the ships. That he was a Venetian, with members of his family involved both in the clerical and in the maritime affairs of the republic, benefited him in negotiating with Venice and in providing the convoys with a crew.

While the negotiations with Venice concerning the provision of a naval convoy for the Byzantines underscore the pope's anti-conciliar policy and his strategy to regain his prestige, they also demonstrate the republic's pragmatism as it operated within the logic of profit and interest. Modern scholarship has abundantly explained and framed the pope's policy as part of the struggle over authority with the religious personages gathered at Basel. On 24 January 1438, while the Byzantines were sailing aboard the papal naval convoy and had almost arrived in Venice, the fathers during the thirty-first session of the Council of Basel had suspended Eugenius IV from the papacy.¹²⁹ Yet the council for the union of the Latin and Greek churches opened at Ferrara a few weeks later, continuing work on doctrinal issues until 6 July 1439, when the union was proclaimed in Florence. Just a few weeks earlier, on 25 June 1439, the Fathers at Basel had formally deposed Eugenius IV as a heretic, electing in his place a new conciliar pope, Felix V (Amadeus VIII, Duke of Savoy).¹³⁰ The union of the Latin and Greek churches had temporarily won the pope more prestige than the fathers, however, and few recognized Felix V.

Less studied and recognized is the role played by Venice in the negotiations, logistics, and assemblage of

the 1438 Byzantine naval convoy. In providing ships, Venice could rely on the Arsenal, one of the largest and most efficient shipyards in the entire Mediterranean. A number of major issues influenced the situation, the most important being fear of a war with the Ottomans. In discussions with both the fathers and the pope, Venice was adamant that the requested ships could not fly Venetian flags, lest the peace with the infidels be put at risk. Venice could not afford another war, especially as it was still enmeshed in a financially draining war against the Duchy of Milan. Having formed a league against the Milanese that included the pope, Venice was obliged to support the papal policy and to provide Eugenius IV with ships. Once Venice entered into negotiations with the pope to provide a naval convoy, another major factor was its commerce with the Levant. Realizing that the papal naval convoy would disrupt the trade with the Black Sea markets and cause financial losses to the merchants, the republic had to provide separate galleys to the pope. This concern was clearly reflected in the naval convoy assembled for the departure of the Byzantines in 1439.

The wealth of Venetian archival records, combined with the conciliar sources, reveal the complexity of the negotiations that eventually led to the assemblage of the naval convoys for the Byzantines, providing precise information on the type of ships and supplementing Syropoulos's account, which has been cited too often. More important, Venetian archival sources disclose unique information about the two different imperial galleys aboard which John VIII sailed to Italy and then back to Constantinople, enabling a new appreciation of the ships portrayed in Filarete's panels depicting the arrival and the return of the emperor. The value of Filarete's representation of the two ships derives from its remarkable adherence to historicity.

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129 *COGD* 2:1045–51.

130 *COGD* 2:1066–69.

